

Becoming a Lifelong Learner

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[0:00] I have given you a rather full outline. There's a lot here. I have a lot of quotations, a lot of verses, and there's more here. I'm not going to read this whole thing to you. There's going to be some parts of it I'll skip.

I just wanted you to have this as a resource, although the quotes, I'm a sucker for quotes, and I will probably read almost all of them. To get this started, I want to tell you about a member of our church. We have a guy in our church named Buddy. That is actually his name.

And if you met Buddy, you would think Buddy is from Kentucky. He's a wonderful, godly man. He's a great husband and father, and he's been a pillar in our church. Buddy is a truck driver, and I don't think I've ever seen Buddy not wearing overalls.

He wears overalls to church. He wears overalls to weddings. He wore overalls to a funeral. And if he outlives me, I hope he wears overalls to my funeral. That would be great.

Buddy is, you meet him, you talk to him. He seems at first like a simple guy, just truck driver, Kentucky, just good, sturdy, blue-collar guy.

[1:03] I love guys like this. And early on, when they first started coming to the church, we had a church picnic, and I sat down at the table with Buddy and his wife Jenny and a few other kids and started talking to Buddy, and Buddy started asking me questions about had I read this book by John Owen, and was I familiar with this book by Martin Luther, and had I read these books by J.I. Packer and Charles Spurgeon and Jonathan Edwards, one of the, I think one of the hardest Christian authors to read.

And I was like, Buddy, you're a reader. This is great. Tell me more about your reading. And he said, well, I didn't start out that way. I wasn't always a reader. I didn't always like reading.

But I used to go to this little country church, and there was a guy from the seminary that while he was in seminary, he came out and was the pastor of our little church, and he said, Buddy, you need to start reading. I'm going to read with you.

And that guy started reading. That pastor started reading with him while he was in seminary. It was just a couple of years, and got him reading, and Buddy became hooked. And I tell you that because if you met Buddy, you would not think, oh, this guy's a reader.

This guy has this expansive vocabulary. He understands all this theology, all this church history. But the good fruit of his life was that he had read. He was a reader, and he was committed to being a learner.

[2:19] And to this day, when I talk to him, Buddy, tell me about what you're reading. He's a truck driver, so he does a lot of audiobooks and things like that. And so I love Buddy's example of being a lifelong learner. I've been asked to talk about being a lifelong learner.

I think this probably has something to do with my role in education. In 2022, I started a college, Trinity College of Louisville. It's a small, very small, very, very small. We have 20 students.

It's a very small Christian liberal arts college. And I wanted a college because I wanted a certain kind of education for my children. I wanted a kind of education that would shape them and that would mold them, that would do more than just qualify them for a specific career path, but would turn them into the kind of people who would be lifelong learners.

And I've been thinking and reading and talking about education and learning from long before I started Trinity College. And so my hope for my kids, my hope for my students, my hope for my fellow church members, my hope for all of us is that we would be lifelong learners.

And I'm going to try today, I'm going to try to set out and make a case for you why this is important. Now, you're probably here because you think this is important already. I think most people see a title like this. It's pretty polarizing.

[3 : 35] They're like, yeah, I'm not doing that. Or they're like, I'm all in and I want to do it better. So I think you are probably here because you want to be a lifelong learner. And my hope is that we will see that one of the primary means that God wants to use to grow every Christian to be more like his son Jesus is the discipline of learning.

And it's a discipline that God intends for us to pursue our entire lives. It's very easy for us to fall into the trap of thinking that, oh, learning, well, that's school. And school is a thing you just got to get through when you're young.

You handle that in elementary school, middle school, college. Maybe you go to college, maybe you don't. And then, all right, I checked that box, man, I'm done with learning. The stuff I've got in my head, I know it, I'm good to go.

But this is a discipline that God intends for us to pursue our entire lives. And I say this because the first step in being a lifelong learner is being convinced that you should be a lifelong learner.

Being convinced that this is wise and good and necessary. And I think I have a quotation on your outline here from John Piper. He wrote a little book that explains why he started a college, why he started Bethlehem College and Seminary.

[4 : 50] The book is called Foundations for Lifelong Learning. I meant to bring it just to show you, but it's about this big, it's blue. You can find it on Amazon. He says, in fact, we believe, he's explaining the rationale behind their college.

He says, we believe that our joy in treasuring Christ above all things and in all things is essential in displaying his glory. Education is the process of growing in our ability to join God in this ultimate purpose to glorify Jesus Christ.

It's a valuable sentence. I'd underline that sentence. Education is the process of growing in our ability to join God in this ultimate purpose to glorify Jesus Christ. That's why we give joy such a prominent place in our understanding of education.

And that's why we have a phrase like education in serious joy. If John Piper's right, and John Piper's right about a lot of things, if John Piper's right about this, that this is what education is, that education is the process of growing in our ability to join God in the ultimate purpose to glorify Jesus Christ.

Well, I want a piece of that. I think every Christian deep down says that sounds important to me. I want to grow. I don't want to stagnate. I don't want to plateau. I don't want to get stuck where I am.

[6 : 05] I want to grow deeper. I want to know Jesus more. Well, that's what education is. And so education doesn't end when you get the diploma or the certificate. Education is a part of the Christian life.

And so I've got some points I'm going to work through here. These are not cleverly worded. They don't rhyme or anything. But I've just given you some numbered points. I just said, you know, I'm just going to say what I want to say here. Number one, Christians are called to be lifelong learners. I'm just making that claim just straight up. Christians are called to be lifelong learners because we serve an infinite God who has shown us unlimited grace. We're called to be lifelong learners because we serve an infinite God who has shown us unlimited grace.

God is infinite. There will always be more to learn about God. I think when we get to heaven, I think there will be libraries. I think there will be books. I hope there will be classrooms and lectures.

I would like to hear the Apostle Paul talk about some stuff. I would like to hear a lecture by Augustine or Luther or C.S. Lewis or Elizabeth Elliot. I want to learn from them. And they're going to be teaching us about God.

[7 : 08] And we will do that for a thousand years and another thousand years and a million years. On and on because there will always be more to learn about God. And he has shown us his unlimited grace.

I've been a Christian a long time. And I feel like almost every day I learn something new about the gospel. I learned something new about salvation. There's aspects to this thing that I've never thought of before.

And I've studied. I've worked hard at this. I've read books. We live in a 90-year-old farmhouse. And the room that my study is in, I'm very concerned for the structural integrity of the floor.

I have so many books in there. I'm really, it's starting to creak and sag. It's not good. But there's always more to learn about God and his ways. And I say this strongly.

Christians are called to be lifelong learners. I'm just going to make that claim straight. I think that's what we are called to do as Christians. We are called to keep learning about God and his ways in the world. We shouldn't think of learning or reading as just one pastime among many.

[8:09] One of my boys likes baseball. The other son likes soccer. Okay, fine. They can have their own taste in that. Oh, some people like to read. Some people don't. Some people like to learn. No. This is a calling for every Christian.

Learning is essential to being a Christian. And there's a ton of verses in the Bible that teach us this. So I would encourage you, if you are even halfway convinced that this is true, just over the next year, make it a project as you read your Bible to be paying attention to verses that use key words like teaching, instruction, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, insight.

There's all kinds of synonyms for this. And it's not just in the book of Proverbs. You're going to find these verses all over your Bible. So one of them I think I put on your outline is Psalm 111 verse 2. This is the theme verse of Trinity College. Psalm 111 verse 2. Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them. Just simple logic, right?

Do you delight in the work that God has done? Do you delight in the gospel? Do you delight in who Jesus is, that he died for us? Well, great are the works of the studied by all who delight.

[9:25] If we delight in these works, let's study. Let's go deeper into them. What about Deuteronomy 6? When your son asks you in time to come, what is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded?

It sounds like every kid I've ever known. Dad, why? Kids are always, why do we do this? What's the meaning of it? What are we talking about here? My kids are always very inquisitive. Then you shall say to your son, we were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord brought us up out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

You recognize that? That little phrase right at the end there, right? That's just shorthand. He's telling them the story of the Exodus. I bet there's a lot more he wants to say about that. Red Sea, it parted. It closed back again on Pharaoh's army. We were starving. We didn't have any food. Manna from heaven. There's this thing with the quail. There was a Ten Commandments. Oh, we screwed up with the golden calf, but God was merciful. He forgave us.

He kept going with us. He led us to the promised land. There's all this bit of the story that he wants to tell them. So if we jump down a little bit, there's another quote here from John Piper. Excuse me.

[10:30] He says, When we speak of enjoying God in all things, the things we have in mind include both the word that God inspired and the world that God made. You might hear in that echoes of Psalm 19, right?

God's two books. We have honey and sunshine and weddings and dew and rain and light and thunder and vultures and lilies and ravens.

We know these things not first from God's word, but from his world. Yet, I cited a scripture to go with each one. In the book, he's got footnotes on every one of those. The significance of that interweaving of world and word is that it points to our answer to the question, What is the focus of our education and serious joy?

What do we actually study? If God's aim in creating and governing the world is the display of his glory, where should we focus our attention? Where will we see the glory? Our answer is that God has two books, his inspired word and his created world.

It's right out of Psalm 19. This is what we study. The Bible, on the one hand, and the whole organic complex of nature and history and human culture on the other.

[11:41] We are not the first to call creation and scripture God's two books. So, let's be the kind of Christians who are reading God's word and studying theology and learning about God's word, but let's also be the kind of people who are curious and inquisitive about how has God made the world.

Last year, I read, it's the best book I've ever read about the periodic table. Okay, it's actually the only book I've ever read about the periodic table. It's called The Disappearing Spoon, and it's about murder and mystery in the establishment of the periodic table.

I had no idea there was so much drama and intrigue behind establishing the periodic table, the disappearing spoon. It was a page turner.

It kept me up at night. And I was like, look at how God made the world. This periodic table, it's got that weird shape. You got blocks all over the place, little stack over here, little stack over here, droops down in the middle. It's all because God made it to work a certain way.

That reflects patterns that God built into the world that are reminders of his faithfulness and his goodness. I got goosebumps so many times reading this book because I thought, what a world God made.

[12:52] How did he think of this stuff? Like electrons, ions, I don't know. Amazing. I recommend it. Read it. It's great. Now, I particularly want to say something here to moms.

So moms have a huge role in this because in most families, dad goes to work, mom is home with the kids. Even if you send your kids to public school or private school, there's still a nurturing role. You are equipping and training up the next generation to know and love God. And so the moms, the work that you are doing in training your kids in whatever form that takes is particularly noble and important because you are setting a trajectory for them by instilling in them that curiosity and that wonder at God's world.

You are preparing the way for them to become lifelong learners. And G.K. Chesterton is an author I very much admire. And he has a word to say to moms.

And I included this in here. Sometimes when Nicole is with me, we'll teach this together and she'll have bits that she shares with the moms. And this is the part she would usually, I would stop, I would give her the mic and she would say this.

[14:00] But here's what Chesterton says. Babies need not to be taught to trade, but to be introduced to the world. That's an interesting way to describe motherhood, isn't it?

How to introduce these little ones to the world. To put the matter shortly, woman is generally shut up in a house with a human being at a time when he asks all the questions that there are and some that there aren't.

If that sounds odd to you, that's just, that's Chesterton. All right. He likes to be clever. Now, if anyone says that this duty of general enlightenment is in itself too exacting and oppressive, I can understand the view.

I can only answer that our race has thought it worthwhile to cast this burden on women in order to keep common sense in the world. Amen. Amen. Yeah, because if we entrusted this to the dads, oh, yeah, it would not be good.

But when people begin to talk about this domestic duty, this is where he's very wise. When people begin to talk about this domestic duty is not merely difficult, but trivial and dreary.

[15:02] I simply give up the question. For I cannot, with the utmost energy of imagination, conceive what they mean. How can it be a large career to tell other people's children about the rule of three and a small career to tell one's own children about the universe?

How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone and narrow to be everything to someone?

No. A woman's function is laborious. Not because it is laborious.

A woman's function is laborious, but because it is gigantic. Not because it is minute. I will pity Mrs. Jones for the hugeness of her task. I will never pity her for its smallness.

I love how he has a vision for the dignity and the power that's involved in motherhood. It's wonderful. All right, second. Christians are called to be lifelong learners because we are people of the book.

God gave us a book. God encoded his words, his thoughts, his desires for all humanity, his plan of salvation. People wrote things down.

[16:13] So being a lifelong learner for us begins with scripture. It begins with scripture. God gave us a book. Think for a moment just about the significance of this idea that God gave us a book.

God did not record the history of his plan of salvation in a movie or in a song. Well, he did some in songs. But he didn't just give us feelings.

He wrote it down in a book. He gave us words. He gave us the story of salvation. God's plan to rescue sinners, to glorify himself through Jesus Christ.

It has come to us in grammar and syntax and vocabulary. It's got punctuation. I mean, it's all the nitty gritty granular bits of written communication.

And this book, because we're people of a book, because we're not just infused with all the knowledge we need right at the beginning of the Christian life, because there's all these metaphors about growing and transforming and becoming, it means that we're going to have to be learners.

[17:23] We don't have everything we need right at the beginning. And you see that in a number of ways. 2 Timothy 3.16 says, And I love this verse because it begins with the word all.

All. It's a simple, short little word. It's just as short in Greek as it is in English. It means the same thing in Greek that it does in English. All of it. Every page of it. Every word of it. There's parts of this book that I find hard to understand.

There's stories that I read and I think, What is this doing in here? I'm reading through the book of Judges right now. Just reading through the Bible every year like I always do. Read through the book of Judges and, Oh, man, this is rough.

It's a, it's a tough book. What do I, what do I do with this? How do I apply this? Well, I'm taught. I'm taught what sin does in the world.

When sin runs rampant, this is it. And sin has consequences. That's what we learn from Judges.

Psalms 43, verse 3. Send out your light and your truth.

[18:32] Let them lead me. Let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. When David prays this, Send out your light and your truth. Light and truth. That's code words for God's word.

He's saying, Send me your word. Give me your word. Lead me. Would your word be light for me? May it be truth for me. May it orient me like a north star so that I know what's what. So I know how to obey.

Let them lead me. He's recognizing that it's through God's word that God will lead us and carry us safe to his holy hill and to his dwelling.

Psalms 119 is like a, it's basically a love poem to God's word. Psalms 119 is such a beautiful chapter of the Bible. Longest chapter in the Bible. And it is all about God's word.

And it is rich in both celebrating God's word and giving us guidance for how to live by God's word.

Psalms 119 verses 9 and verses 11. So two verses here.

[19:29] I got them both for you. How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. We're people of the book. I've stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

So being people of this book has a very practical, functional outworking in our lives. As we read and know this book better and as we conform our lives to it and seek to obey it we will more and more obey and glorify God.

It's very explicit in the book of Revelation. John is told write what you see in a book. Write therefore these things the things that you have seen those that are those that are to take place after this.

So John is told to write a book. It's a book. We're people of this book. And so this is this is important for us to think about because this means that as Christians if we are going to submit ourselves to God's will and try to follow God's ways we are going to have to be people who understand words.

God gave us a book. He didn't give us pictures. I'm sure there's movies and shows that have been made that are useful for teaching about who Jesus is and what he's done. But God didn't give us streaming video.

[20:50] He gave us a book. He gave us words. And so it's good for us to think what is my relationship to words? Do I love words? Do I want to read words? Do I study words? And for some of us this might be this might be difficult because we might think you know I'm not much of a reader.

We'll talk some about that in a few minutes. But it's good for us to start with evaluation and just ask am I a person of the book? And now it's important we avoid the temptation to comparison here because there might be somebody that comes to mind that maybe has a house like mine that is just creaking and groaning under the weight of the books they've accumulated.

Somebody who's always reading you might think well I'm not like that person. I don't know am I really? No the question that each one of us needs to ask is just are you growing in your love for God's word?

It's just very simple. This is you honestly humbly before the Lord. Are you growing in your love for God's word? You don't have to compare yourself to anyone else in this room anyone else in this church anyone else on the planet doesn't matter how your library compares to somebody else maybe you're like I started a lot of books and I haven't finished them and I feel no it's okay are you growing in your love for God's word?

Let's just start there. Okay now third Christians are called to be lifelong learners not only because we're people of the book but because we're responsible we are responsible to love God and to love our neighbors hmm let's think about the connection here what does this have to do with learning?

[22:21] Right do you have to learn do you have to learn to do this? We know that we're told to do this right Mark 12 30 and 31 I think it's on your outline there you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind and with all your strength and the second

commandment is like it you shall love your neighbor as yourself there's no other commandment greater than these what does this have to do with learning?

Why do you need to be a learner to fulfill these verses to obey these verses? Well I think there's a couple reasons first and foremost learning is meant to shape us it's meant to do more than inform our minds it does that but if you think of learning as just sort of like if your brain is just this sort of like like mental pantry and we're just coming and like sticking stuff on there okay the Norman Conquest happened in 1066 and Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation in 1517 and we're just throwing names and dates and facts and figures in the shelves of the pantry of our mind that's valuable that's useful and that's good but that's not the transformation that learning is meant to bring about because learning it does include that but learning is mostly about our affections it's about training what we love right it's about directing and shaping our loves that we would love the right things in the right way because our problem our biggest problem is not a lack of information that's what Plato taught so the ancient

Greek philosopher Plato said almost all of the misery in the world comes about because of a lack of education because people don't have enough information and I read a when I was in seminary I had a friend who wrote a paper and he included a footnote in it that said if Adam and Eve had just known what they were going to what would have happened when they sinned they wouldn't have done it and my professor a guy named Tom Schreiner brilliant theologian he just said I think that's heresy I think that's a platonic view of sin that's what Plato taught that's not what the Bible teaches and my friend struggled I think to back down eventually eventually came down off of that but Christians for centuries have said our problem is disordered loves we love the wrong things we love the right things in the wrong way and we love the wrong things and most of all we love ourselves and the great

Christian theologian Augustine I'm sure you've heard of him he had a phrase in Latin I think it went in *curvatus in se* he talked about our souls turn in on themselves they curve in on themselves we're meant to be made outward outward focused outward serving and what sin does turns our attentions and our affections back in on our own hearts and so learning being lifelong learners we're embarking on a lifelong project of reshaping and redirecting our affections and our desires we're learning to love the right things in the right way we're learning to lay down our lives no longer as it says 2 Corinthians 5:15 no longer live for ourselves but for him we're learning to love the Lord your God and to love our neighbor as ourselves and we need that we need that it teaches us this reordering of our affections our loves affections is a good word it's a word the Puritans like to use more than they talked about desires they talked about cravings things like that but affections I like that phrase because it gets at what do we what do we really love deep down what do we want what are we interested in what are we passionate about and so this lifelong project being lifelong learners teaches us to hate sin teaches us to love grace teaches us grief over sin and all its consequences in the world like death teaches us joy in God's people it trains us for patience and forgiveness forbearance with difficult people those are not capabilities that we would have naturally we need our affections and our interests and our desires to be reshaped in these ways and so there's a quote on here from David Pallison I think this probably got on your outline it says David Pallison was a counselor he died a couple years ago very wise wise counselor and he talked about how important it is to use our affections to begin to love other people excuse me excuse me he said we learn about other people you gain a feel for human experience you come to understand riches and nuances that you could never understand just from knowing the circle of people you happen to know you come to understand the ways that people differ from each other and the ways that we're all alike an exceedingly valuable component of wisdom you become a bigger person with a wider scope of perception all those things you come to know illustrate and amplify the relevance and wisdom of our God he's talking about how important it is to be a lifelong learner and to learn what are people like now one of the things I love about

[27:46] Palacin is he says this is why Christians should read fiction Palacin was he had a I got to meet him a couple of times and talk some about his reading habits and he had a particular love for the Russian novelists which I have I think I've started all of them three times and finished one of them once I finished *Crime and Punishment* for the first time about a year ago and I was proud of myself for that and I hope I'll read more but David Palacin said look part of being lifelong learners is let's get a hold of stories and I love this because I think as Christians we see things like Wayne Grudem systematic theology Herman Bavik on doctrine and think yeah it's great and we should

read that we should read doctrine we should read theology that's good I have shelves of books of theology but the problem with that is those doctrines in the pages of a book like systematic theology they're very abstract it's hard it's very hard to jump from a phrase like the absolute consequent necessity of the atonement to real life how do I get from this to that

I'm like whoa but the beauty of story is that it teaches us what the world is like it teaches us what people are like it teaches us what we are like we see ourselves in characters we see people we know in characters we were just talking right before class about little Dorit and Dickens is fantastic at creating these absurd caricatures these just bigger than life characters but you're like you know I know somebody like that or maybe I am like that sometimes and they make us laugh but they're poignant because we think wow I see the downstream of facts and consequences of sin and grace and so reading fiction is good and wise we'll talk more about that in a minute alright let's keep moving number four number four Christians are called to be lifelong learners because it is by thinking by thinking that we will not be conformed to this world I mentioned a minute ago as we started to kind of think of a lifelong project of being on the lookout for words about learning in your Bible words like knowledge and insight and discernment and things like that well another way to do this is just as you're reading particularly through the New Testament pay attention to how often the Bible talks about our minds our minds our thinking it's surprising and about 25 or 30 years ago a theologian named John Stott wrote a book called Your Mind Matters it's a short little book it's really good and then about 10 years ago John Piper wrote a book called Think just about how to think Christianly all of our incoming Trinity College students we assign them to read over the summer before they begin Trinity College because Your Mind Matters becoming lifelong learners it's meant to shape our thinking it's meant to shape our thinking so I mentioned a minute ago it's meant to shape our affections it's also meant to shape our thinking some of you might see where I'm going with this the Puritans talked about the human soul like this alright little anthropology lesson right what does it mean to be human what is a human well okay human is two parts material and immaterial you know what I mean by that body and soul right body and soul so there's a physical part of you that you know you could weigh you could measure how tall you could shake hands you can feel somebody see their eye color but there's also an immaterial part of you there's a where does where does laughter come from exactly you know where does that impulse to laugh come from where do where do hopes and dreams where are they in in all of this and so that that non-physical part of you many people call a soul right and so some theologians have said particularly the Puritans said well the soul is made up of the mind the will and the emotions those three things the mind the will and the affections and so we've just talked about the affections now we're talking about the mind this actually goes back to the to the Greeks the ancient Greeks thought that man was made up they referred to the head the chest and the guts they had this word for guts the word was splagna which is kind of a gross sounding word and the word could mean literally like intestines so when Judas hung himself and it says his splagna spilled!

guts so the guts are the volition the ability to make a decision the courage to act so the mind thinks and processes the chest the heart we would say wants and desires that's why C.S.

[32 : 46] Lewis in his famous book The Abolition of Man on education he has a chapter called Men Without Chests he's referring to that Greek way of thinking of humans that they're men with no ability to love properly anymore but we have minds that was a little threw that in for free that was a little diversion we have minds so our minds are meant to be shaped by God as well right look at Romans 12 2 do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by how you use your time be transformed by your entertainment choices be transformed by your shopping list no be transformed by the renewal of your mind we always think of conversion as like ah we get a new heart isn't it great that you have a new heart yes that's very biblical very very true you know what else you start to get you start to get a new mind you start to think differently maybe for me I started to think my brain didn't turn on until I became a Christian like many young men I did not start really thinking at all about the world just led by my desires until

I became a Christian and began to be transformed by the renewal of the mind Philippians 3 15 let those of us who are mature think this way look at how he connects maturity and thinking let those of us who are mature think this way and if anything you think otherwise God will reveal that to you also Philippians 4 8 and 9 this verse has a special place in my heart because when I was young in high school and college Friday night I'd be leaving the house to go out with my friends we're going to

watch a movie or something mom would always yell right as I'm leaving the door remember Philippians 4 I'd be like mom taking all the fun out of the evening because look at what it says finally brothers whatever's true whatever's honorable whatever's just whatever's pure whatever's lovely whatever's commendable if there's any excellence there's anything worthy of praise think about these things well that narrows down the movie choices for me and my friends quite a bit doesn't it gotta gotta gotta check some boxes on this list that is narrowing our selection considerably think about these things 2nd

Timothy 2 7 what a promise this is think over what I say for the Lord will give you understanding and everything what a promise Paul is telling Timothy and those words are recorded for us as well think over what I say think about what Paul says think about his books think about his argument think about his sentences!

Think about these verses individual verses and God will give you understanding I want that I want to learn how to think Nicole were here she would tell a story about how this worked for her when she was young she had a sort of incipient feminism in it she just she my wife is a go getter she is a little tiny five foot nothing firecracker of a woman she got a lot of ideas the alarm goes off in the morning she just sits up and she is like I got an idea here's what we should do today babe I mean like I'm like 20 minutes away from coffee like can we just she's always going and she early on she just she had a kind of drive towards feminism and her mom took her through books by Elizabeth Elliot Elliot so as a preteen and as a teenager they just started reading Elizabeth Elliot together and if Nicole were here what she would say was look Elizabeth Elliot is very persuasive and she has a very compelling personal example but what convinced

Nicole of a biblical view of womanhood was how Elizabeth Elliot handled scripture and she kept bringing scripture to bear in her argument and that was what convinced Nicole because of a biblical view of womanhood and now is passing that on to our daughters and our students and other young women in our church so grateful to God for how she thought about these things because the Lord gave her understanding in everything so we are called to think to be lifelong learners because by thinking will not be conformed to the pattern of this world now number five let's keep going Christians are called to be lifelong learners because by reading good books we can renew our minds now I put in here reading good books I could have said a lot of things I could have said by listening to podcasts by taking classes by discussing with people but by reading good books we can renew our minds so I am not minimizing the value of all those other means of learning right there's a lot of really this is a great time to be alive because man you can couple of clicks couple of taps on your phone and you can be taken a class by almost any world class scholar in the history of the planet

[37 : 42] I mean it's amazing but I want you to think for a minute about the role that reading has played in the lives of Christians over the centuries and maybe you know the story I mentioned Augustine several times maybe you know the story of Augustine and his conversion it was for years his mother Monica had been praying for him he was a very immoral young man very proud very independent and over and over he says in confessions that he resisted his mother's attempts to persuade him to become a Christian he said no I don't want it and even eventually when he started to see the wisdom of it he started to see that maybe he should become a Christian he was still so attached to his sin he actually prayed to God at one point he says I prayed to God Lord make me pure but not yet it's not a good prayer don't pray yet and he tells a story in confessions how one night he's one evening or something he's walking down which is

Latin and it means take up and read and he soon walked out of earshot of that but the voice kept ringing in his head and when he got home he picked up his Bible and he started ringing reading and if I remember I think it's from Romans chapter 5 and as he read as he read the Holy Spirit worked he was convicted of his sin he repented and in that moment he became a Christian and he attributed his conversion to reading the book he read the book and so reading has now for centuries played a really important role in the lives of Christians C.S.

Lewis has a book of essays called God in the Dock and in that book he has one particular essay called On the reading of old books it's not hard to tell what the only palliative that's just a fancy word for cure the only cure is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds and this can be done only by reading old books not of course that there is any magic about the past this is very wise people were no cleverer then than they are now they made as many mistakes as we but they not the same mistakes they will not flatter us and our errors we are already committing

and their own errors being now open and palpable will not end dangerous two heads are better than one not because either is infallible but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the same direction to be sure the books of the future would be just as good a corrective as books of the past but unfortunately we cannot get at them they haven't been written yet very wise words

Lewis is recognizing that there is wisdom especially in reading older books because they don't make the same mistakes we do and we live in an age that is afflicted or maybe I could say affected would be more charitable affected by certain views of the world that are difficult to escape so we live in an era that is affected by post modernism that is affected by views of gender equality that is well it's a confused view of gender equality views of capitalism or socialism views of politics views of commerce and we are a very pragmatic people we are a very materialistic people and even as much as any one of us might resist the temptations to pragmatism or capitalism or materialism it's in the air it's around us all the time and it's very very difficult to be so self aware and to see ourselves in the scope of history of ideas to understand what are the mistakes

I'm making right now and the way those mistakes will get exposed is to read somebody who's not making those mistakes it's very wise now the Bible does that more than anything else of course we're going to be readers of the Bible so look at you guys you're here this morning because you want to learn how to be lifelong learners so you're down this road already so many different forms of learning right when I talk about reading I again I just want to make this really clear there's a lot of very valuable forms of learning so we learn every Sunday morning from God's word when we're fed through sermons we're fed through Sunday classes like this you come to Sunday school you are learning that's wonderful we have audio books and all sorts of recorded material online that we could listen to for the rest of our lives we can learn a lot through fellowship through talking with others one of my favorite verses I didn't put this on your outline Romans 1 verse 11 and 12

[43:04] I think it is when Paul says I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift and I think there he's talking about the gospel that then he says that we might be mutually encouraged by each other's faith both yours and mine that's an amazing verse the apostle Paul one of the most learned men in history who almost certainly had the entire Old a guy who had encountered the risen Christ personally on the road to Emmaus and this guy says hey you young new baby Christians in Rome part of this brand new church plant can't wait to see you guys I want to learn from you that we might be mutually encouraged by each other's faith both yours and mine we can learn so much from one another so we need the gift of fellowship it's valuable but I put reading at the top of this because God has used reading over the years as a huge benefit for

Christians there's a thinker named Francis Bacon who wasn't much of a Christian but he said reading makes a full man conference he means like fellowship makes a ready man and writing an exact man C.S.

Lewis talks about this too the importance of books he says the majority though they are sometimes frequent readers do not set much store by reading he says they turn to it as a last resource they abandon it with alacrity with speed as soon as any alternative pastime turns up it is kept for railway journeys illnesses odd moments of enforced solitude or for the process called reading oneself to sleep they sometimes combine it with desultory conversation often with listening to the radio but literary people are always looking for leisure and silence in which to read and do so with their whole attention when they are denied such attentive and undisturbed reading even for a few days they feel impoverished do you feel impoverished if you have gone a few days without reading now what would C.S.

Lewis say today he's talking about oh some people just take a book on a railway journey well we take our phones and we just do this all through it what would he have to say today I wonder I just recently just last week there was an article in an academic journal less than half of all adults in the United States reported having read a book of any kind in the last year fewer than half read a book of any kind only 38 percent read a novel or a short story the proportion of American adults who read for pleasure right what percentage just you know see if you come up with a number!

What percentage of American adults do think read fall into 16 fewer than 16 percent of adult Americans read for pleasure on any given day children you think it's more or less fewer than 2 percent oh it breaks my heart so kids if you read for fun you're doing a great job keep it up don't give that up you're doing something that hardly anybody else does you are among the elite keep reading keep it up keep it up and we might think well so what some people at this moment they might raise their hand and think so what hey technology has moved on man I've got the AI now I

don't need to read that book I we use type write write maybe this thing goes in the
[47:12] Smithsonian and I want to argue that reading is more important than ever for Christians to develop and to expand and to protect the ability to read it's a vital skill for every Christian I read I came across another article recently and said reading is not a virtue!

I thought let me see where this is going I started reading and this author made a great point said just being a reader isn't enough what you read is what matters I can get behind that I need to know what you mean by that but I can get behind that and so being lifelong learners there's a lot of ways we can learn and if you're here you're listening to this later and you think look I'm just not a reader I'm a really slow reader I have a learning disability I'm dyslexic or something like that there's a lot of really great good valid encouraging helpful important ways that you can keep reading right that you keep learning so if there's any reason you think I'm just not good at reading okay fine get an audiobook audiobook audiobook I count audiobooks as reading okay if you listen to an audiobook you have read that book you do not need to apologize for that or put an asterisk next to it do you realize that throughout human history most people heard things read out loud to them you have that one guy in the village who got an education and people would come to him and be like could you read for us and he would read and do read it was the only way they knew how to read there read there's a legend that people thought

Julius Caesar was insane because he knew how to read silently with his mouth shut people are like that's nuts man look at that guy he's reading I can't hear anything right so we the world has changed and so if you have to listen to it to get it praise God what a great time to live right you can queue up the audio book go learn something that's fantastic so I have some recommendations for you I want to finish with this just a few ideas on recommendations to be a lifelong learner and especially to be a reader as a lifelong learner start by reading what you enjoy all right if you are trying to establish or recover or grow a habit of reading read what you enjoy read something you enjoy that's okay we're all going to be dead soon I tell my kids that all the time look we're all going to be dead soon read something you enjoy there's no particular virtue in slogging through a thing and you're like these Russian novelists are just so depressing go read

Jane Austin fine read something you enjoy great read to stretch yourself read to stretch yourself and I say this particularly to young people that if you've read the chronicles of Narnia or Lord of the Rings or Harry Potter 37 times and you're like I'm just ready for another lap man it's so good okay great just put another book in between each one read to stretch yourself get out of your comfort zone try something new where can you go!

I would also encourage you to buy books especially to buy physical books parents buy books if you want your kids to be readers I read a study recently and it said if you want to raise children who are readers three things you can do number one the very best thing you can do is read to them the second best thing is for them to see you reading your kids ever come around books around the house we have books literally in every room they are all over the place you can read something you don't have to do that much you might also think about reading with a plan are there books you always wanted to read do you have a list of those books have you written down how about August I am finally going to read Mansfield Park or

[51:22] Little Dorrit or Crime and Punishment maybe August September it's a long book whatever do you have a list of books you want to read that could be as simple as a stack of books on the nightstand next to your bed that would be fine do you keep a list of books that you have read I would encourage you to think about that start a list of books that!

books that I read every year I organized it by year in 2017 I read these books keep a list of books that you read it's very encouraging to look back on and think about reading how you could use reading at different times of reading at times of the day I get up in the morning I have my quiet time the first thing I do spend time with God I open my lot of people do that and then I think end of the day I read a book that absolutely doesn't matter if I remember anything I lay on my back and read a paragraph or two and I can't tell you how many times I broke my nose and hit me in but there times you can read can you make time

John Piper has a thing read you the whole thing but there's a paragraph here in your outline where John Piper does the math on taking advantage of your lunch break if you read 15 minutes a day and you read this many a minute how many pages could you read in a year it's very encouraging it's a little shocking to say just 15 minutes a day. If you gave yourself to that, how much could you read in a year? So feel free to read in different ways. Read print books, read an e-book. I'm not a big fan

personally of Kindle. I like to, because I always think, I'll be reading, I'll be like, there's this quote. It's about this far through the book. It's on the top right side.

Right? That's why I don't, that's why I love keeping my books because I know where stuff is and I underline, I dog ear and I do all that stuff. So read with a pen in hand. Do that too. Read with a pen in hand and develop your own system for marking stuff. How do you want to come back to stuff? Do you want to be able to access it again? Do you want to be able to remember something?

Do you have any kind of system for returning to good stuff you've read? And you can develop a system for that. A guy named Andy Nacelli wrote a book called How to Read a Book. And he's got a great little section in there on how to mark up your book. And if you don't want to buy that book, he's got it on, he's got that section that's on his blog. Andy Nacelli, N-A-S-E-L-L-I. So read with a pen in hand and develop your own system for marking and keeping good quotes. Happy to talk about that, the practicalities of that. So we're almost out of time. I want to just come back to that little phrase that Augustine heard the child singing over the garden wall. Tole lege, take up and read.

[54:47] I hope you're persuaded to be a lifelong learner. And I hope as part of that, you see reading as incredibly valuable and important. More than anything, if you do nothing else, read this book. This is the book of books.

I love literature. I love history. I love biography. I love books of all kinds. And I have yet to meet a book that compares to this book in any way. I've read many, many books. And this book is, there's nothing like it.

It is living and active, sharper than any sort. So first and foremost in your reading plan, every day, how can you read some of this book? How can you, parents, how can you lead your children in reading this book and learning in age-appropriate ways how to read this book? How can we train and equip the next generation to love this book? Let's be people of the book and let's pass that on to the young people, to the children, and to their next generation after them. So let me pray for us and ask God to bless our lifelong learning. Father in heaven, we thank you for your word.

We love it. We want to know it better. And father, I pray for my brothers and sisters here that you would help all of us, that all of us would grow to know and love your word even more.

Would we be lifelong learners? And father, would you help us to learn in every possible way?

Would we learn from books? Help us to learn from lectures and classes. Help us to learn from one another. Help us to learn about you and about your ways. Help us to learn skills. Help us to learn the skills of wisdom and encouragement, the skills of speaking truth and love to our brothers and sisters.

[56:34] Lord, help us to learn practical skills for real life. Lord, we want to be lifelong learners because you are an infinite God and you've shown us unending grace. And there's always more to learn about you.

So father, would you empower our learning that we might know and love you even better, that we might serve you and lay down our lives for you and for our neighbors. We pray all these things in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, whom we love with all our hearts. Amen.