



There are few stronger family bonds than this habit of devoting an occasional hour to reading aloud. <sup>1</sup>

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— MARYELLEN ST. CYR —

Charlotte Mason speaks of the family read aloud as a habit, 1-2 evenings each week for an hour. “In the first place, to get information is *not* the object of the family reading, but to make the young people acquainted with the flavor of, to give them a *taste* for a real “book”—that is, roughly speaking, a work of so much literary merit, that it should be read and valued for the sake of that alone, whatever its subject-matter.”

This rule makes a clean sweep of the literature to be found in nine houses out of ten—twaddling storybooks, funny or “good”; worthless novels; second-rate writing, whether in works of history or of general literature; compendiums, abstracts, short sketches of great lives, useful information in whatever form. None of these should be admitted ... and, indeed, the less they are *read* at all, the better.

Mason contends for the *real*; real books impress upon the reader embodied ideas through interesting characters and human relations, well-chosen language, literary in nature, and themes central to life, embedded in story. This shared time of reading aloud and active listening provides a formative time for each family member, often revelational, as the text stimulates thought and discussion.

The practice is pleasant at the time, and pleasant in the retrospect, it gives occasion for much bright talk, merry and wise, and quickens family affection by means of intellectual sympathy. Indeed, the wonder is that any family should neglect such a simple means of pure enjoyment, and of moral, as well as intellectual culture. But this, of reading aloud, is not a practice to be taken up and laid down at pleasure. Let the habit drop, and it is difficult to take it up again, because everyone has in the meantime struck a vein of intellectual entertainment for himself—trashy stuff, it may be,—which makes him an unwilling listener to the family “book.”

### Questions to Consider

- How can our family create a family read aloud with opportunities “for bright talk, merry and wise, and family affection by means of intellectual sympathy?”
- What hinder us?