



Raising a Reader

3 steps to foster a love of books starting from birth!

by Cheri Gregory

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“What can I do now to prepare my children to succeed in school?” I’m often asked when I speak to MOPS groups. In this age of computerized everything, my low-tech answer raises eyebrows. “Books and reading...followed by more books and more reading...and after that, even more books and even more reading!” is my standard reply.

Thanks to Jim Trelease’s *Read Aloud Handbook* (<http://www.trelease-on-reading.com/>), Daniel and I became fanatical about Family Reading Time when our kids were just 2 and 4. We quit watching TV and spent 1-2 hours per night cuddled under blankets together on the couch, reading and reading and reading.

Now 18 and 20, Jonathon and Annemarie have both received substantial college scholarships for their strong SAT scores (Jonathon scored a perfect 800 in Reading, in fact!) Neither spent time practicing or attending special review classes; Family Reading Time provided them both with 18 years of “SAT Prep”!

And both of our children remember Family Reading Time as the best part of the day. We recently brainstormed a list of the hundreds of books we’ve read together over the years; as the kids shouted out titles, they added commentary like “Oh, I loved the James Harriott books!” and “Dad’s *Screwtape* voice was scary!” Both are very vocal about their plans to raise their own children low-tech with lots and lots of books and reading.

Step 1: Read Aloud as a Family

WHY? 1) to condition your child’s brain to associate reading with enjoyment
2) to build your child’s “listening vocabulary”

WHEN? **If it matters, we’ll make it happen; we’ll sacrifice something less important.**
Family Reading Time is FUN for a Sanguine, MEANINGFUL for a Melancholy, ACHIEVEMENT for a Choleric, and CONNECTION for a Phlegmatic.

WHAT? **Birth - Teething** *Soft books & board books*
Toddler - Preschool *Identifying books & short story books*
As soon as there’s interest *Early Chapter books*

HOW? **Give it all you’ve got!**

Appeal to all three primary learning modalities: auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. Become a “Drama Queen” and ham it up with special voices, dramatic pacing and pauses, and crazy facial expressions.

What about times when you have nothing left to give?

Audiobooks! You can relax on the couch with your child, turn the pages, and enjoy a book read wonderfully by a professional. Making your own audiobooks is also a fabulous family activity (and they make marvelous gifts!)

2. Model Reading for Your Child

- WHY? 1) You are a living commercial for reading. Your child wants to imitate being “all grown up.” So being “all grown up” needs to include enjoyment of reading!
2) You need to feed your mind and heart consistently as a woman, a wife, a mother, a friend, a daughter, etc. Authors make wonderful mentors for your many roles!
- WHEN? **Establish Mom’s Reading Spot & Time...you deserve it!**
Also, keep books in the car, in your purse, in the kitchen, on your nightstand.
Don’t just read behind closed (bathroom!) doors; your kids need to **see** you reading!
- WHAT? **Read what you need!** Parenting advice...the Bible...humor...children’s books...poetry...
- HOW? **One chapter...or page...or line at a time.** (Remember the days of staying up all night to finish a gripping novel? Those days are gone...long gone!)

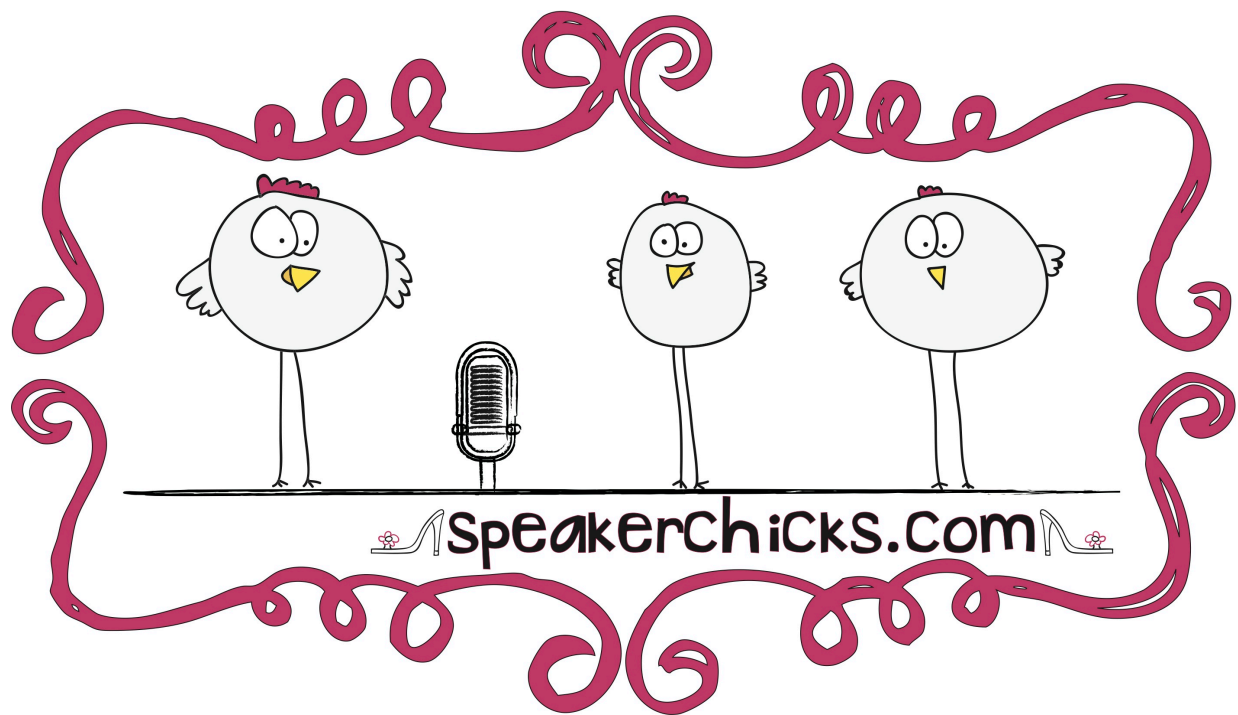
3. Make Reading Materials Available (lots and lots!)

- WHY? Research is clearly demonstrates that children with the most books at home have
1) the greatest interest in reading, and
2) the highest reading scores once they learn to read.
- WHEN? **Use your judgment as a parent.** I am not advocating spoiling your child or conditioning him/her that you will buy books whenever (s)he demands them! Use your discretion.
I found it best to shop for books without my children and keep them tucked away.
- WHAT? **Aim for a wide variety!** Books...magazines...letters/e-mails from friends and relatives...audiobooks...”books” your child has made...photo albums with journaling...
- HOW? **Bookstores**
Amazon.com (*with a Prime membership you get free 2-day delivery!*)
used book stores
half.com (*my favorite used book site*)
Moms’ book exchange
Ask for books & specific magazine subscriptions as gifts (*in lieu of more “stuff”!*)
THE LIBRARY

Engaging, entertaining, and enthusiastic, Cheri Gregory connects women to the transforming power of God’s love. A story-teller extraordinaire, Cheri draws from Scripture and personal experiences that resonate with women’s frustrations, fears and failures, bringing hope that they are *not* alone and inspiring courage that they *can* grow beyond their circumstances.

Cheri, herself, was raised in what *appeared* to be the “perfect Christian home.” As a child, compensating for underlying family issues, she strove to be the perfect “good little girl.” As a teenager, reacting to her older brother’s drug addiction, she nearly lost her life to eating disorders. Cheri identifies with those who are burdened and offers hope for the transformation possible through the renewing power of God’s rescuing love.

Married since 1988 to her opposite Personality, Daniel, a pastor, teacher, and musician, Cheri is an English teacher and the mother of two college-age kids (who are also opposite Personalities): Annemarie and Jonathon.



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