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CHAPTER 1

Words from Writers about Writing

This chapter consists of an interview with two respected and well-known authors, Paul Maier and Julie Stiegemeyer—first, a little bit about them.

Dr. Paul Maier is the Russell H. Seibert Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University. He is also a Lutheran pastor and has served as the Second Vice-President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He is a graduate of Harvard University and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. On a Fulbright Scholarship, Dr. Maier also studied at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, and Basel, Switzerland. Dr. Maier is the author of numerous articles and books, both fiction and nonfiction. His historical documentaries include *Pontius Pilate* and *The Flames of Rome*. He also wrote the best-selling *A Skeleton in God's Closet* and its sequel *More Than a Skeleton: It Was One Man against the World*. Dr. Maier also produced a translation of *Josephus—The Essential Works* and *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius of Caesarea*, and coauthored *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?*, which critically refuted the 2003 best-seller *The Da Vinci Code*. Maier has also written a number of children's books, including *The Very First Christmas* and *The Very First Easter*. More than five million Maier books are now in print in a dozen languages, as well as over 250 scholarly articles in professional journals. Dr. Maier lectures widely; appears frequently in national radio, television, and newspaper interviews; and has received numerous awards. He has also produced three four-hour video series dealing with Jesus, St. Paul, and the Early Church.

Julie Stiegemeyer writes books for children, feature articles, and Sunday School curriculum. Julie lives in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where her husband serves as a pastor. She was born and raised in Denver, Colorado, and graduated as a Lutheran teacher from Concordia, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Later, she received a Master of Arts for Teachers (MAT) in English Education from Indiana University. Julie has taught sixth grade in a

Lutheran school as well as English as a Second Language. She also edited *Higher Things: Dare to Be Lutheran*, a quarterly youth magazine. Her numerous children's books include *Things I See in Church*, *Colors I See in Church*, *Things I Do in Church*, *Things I Hear in Church*, *Things I See at Easter*, *Things I See at Christmas*, *Things I See at Baptism*, *Stephen Stands Strong*, *Saint Nicholas: The Real Story of the Christmas Legend*, *Thanksgiving: A Harvest Celebration*, *Baby in the Manger*, *Bright Easter Day*, *Bethlehem Night*, *Mommy Promises*, and *Cheep! Cheep!* Julie is also an author for the Growing in Christ Sunday School materials, numerous journal and magazine articles, and poetry. She presents at workshops, conferences, and retreats on topics relating to writing and growing in the Christian faith.

Paul Maier and Julie Stiegemeyer are dissimilar in many ways. They grew up in different parts of the country, went to different schools, and differ in age and gender. But they also have much in common. Both came to know of God's love and care for them at an early age. Both believe in Jesus as God's Son who was born long ago in Palestine to a virgin named Mary, lived a sinless life and died a tormented death in our place to redeem and save us, and who rose victorious from the dead on Easter morning. Paul and Julie also share a love for words and a gift for using words in writing to communicate with others. Both have written extensively and thank God for the opportunity to tell and write about Jesus. We asked Paul and Julie several questions about their experiences in communicating through writing. Their responses offer valuable insights for all who desire to grow in their ability to communicate more effectively through the use of words, and especially for those who belong to God through faith in Christ Jesus. Their responses follow.

Question: One of the qualities of good writing is freshness—the quality of creating text that comes off as real, not contrived or artificial. What process or strategies do you use to generate ideas for what to write?

Paul: I'm usually prompted to write in response to something that puzzles me or even angers me—a desire to dig deeper for explanations to answer the whys, to correct bad or sensational pseudo-scholarship, or to fill an obvious need. One example of writing to fill a need resulted in my book, *Josephus—the Essential Works*. Few people were reading the crucially important information available in the works of first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (AD 37–100) because of the huge amount of his material and the poor translations of it. I felt that some very valuable perspectives were being overlooked.

Josephus, for example, supplies about a thousand times as much data on Herod the Great as does Matthew's Gospel. Twice, Josephus refers to Jesus. His second reference (in *Antiquities* 20:200) concerns the episode involving James, whom he defines as “the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ” (from Maier's *Josephus—The Essential Works* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1994]). Earlier, in the middle of his reports on Pontius Pilate's administration, Josephus has a longer passage on Jesus. For centuries, this had been dismissed as a Christian interpolation. But what is doubtless the original wording of *Antiquities* 18:63 has now been restored. It reads, “At this time there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. Many people among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified, and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive. Accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have reported wonders. And the tribe of the Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day” (from Schlomo Pines's *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and Its*

Implications [Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1971]).

I'm moved to write because I believe I have something important that needs to be recorded so that it may be shared with others. It's hardly ever a case of “Gee, what can I write about now for my next article or book?” I am prompted to write when I detect unanswered questions, voids of information, or obvious needs.

Question: Do you enjoy writing?

Paul: Sure. For me another motivation for writing is just to have fun, which I indulged in the case of my novels *A Skeleton in God's Closet* and *More Than a Skeleton*. Though these books involved doing research and applying what I learned, the fun came in developing the characters and giving them personality, placing them in an interesting setting, and giving them conditions and stressors to which they must react and respond.

Question: Fictional books, such as those you mention, make for a great way to learn about history while at the same time getting you to think about your faith and why you believe as you do about God and the world He has created for us. How do you begin what must be the enormous task of writing a piece of historical fiction?

Paul: I begin by doing three things: research, research, and more research. Careful research is vitally important if you are writing nonfiction. But good research also helps fiction. Then, when you have all the data you need, you superimpose a good outline on it and start writing. In the case of fiction, be prepared for exciting changes in the plot that you hadn't thought of earlier. In that sense, one of the great trade secrets of authorship is this: you can't believe how close writing is to reading.

Question: That's interesting. What exactly do you mean?

Paul: When you read something, you gain insights and grow in understanding and perception because of what the action, thoughts, and

Teaching and Learning Language Arts from a Christian Perspective

First among Subjects

With the exception of religion, language arts leads all school subjects. First considered and continually pursued by those on an educational journey, language arts opens doors for students to knowledge, exploration, comprehension, and response in all subject areas. Language arts deals with communication through words. Words express human emotions, entertain, motivate, and inform.

Language arts can be understood and approached according to the six separate arts of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing. These arts are interconnected and are never experienced in isolation. Nevertheless, three developmental stages can be identified in emerging proficiency. First, students need a solid foundation in communication skills. Upon this foundation they next build comprehension and develop an understanding of how to apply their communication skills. Then, finally, students combine their abilities and understandings and respond as informed producers and critical consumers of the means of communication.

Language arts and all other subjects can be taught and learned in Christian schools through the following overall goals, which have been the hallmark of the Christian education materials prepared by Concordia Publishing House through the years. These materials aim to assist teachers and leaders so that students

- through the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, may know God, especially His seeking and forgiving love in Christ, and may respond in faith and grow into Christian maturity;
- see themselves as the reconciled, redeemed children of God and individual members of

Christ's body, the Church, and live happily in peace with God, themselves, and their fellow human beings;

- may be encouraged to express their joy in worship of God and in loving service to others;
- may, by the grace of God, value all of God's creative work in His world and Church, witness openly to Christ as the Savior of all people, and participate actively in God's mission to the Church and the world; and
- may joyfully live in the Christian hope of new life in Christ now and in eternity.

Language Arts and the Things of God

For God's people, language arts connects with matters of faith in the following ways:

- God used words to call the world into being.
- He sent Jesus, the Word made flesh, to save us.
- God gives us language so that we may learn and grow in Him through His Word as it is heard, read, and studied and as it is received together with the elements in the Sacraments.
- God blesses us with language to admonish, comfort, and build up our sisters and brothers in the faith.
- God's grace leads us to use words to thank, praise, and petition God and to bring to others the Good News of Jesus and His forgiving love.

God Is the Author of Communication

God instituted communication. Through words and actions, He tells us about Himself. His majesty and awesome power are revealed to us through His creation. The psalmist proclaims, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).

When He created our first parents as the crown of His handiwork, they were holy and interacted in perfect harmony with God and each other. But sin destroyed that full and completely satisfying communion, causing God such anger and remorse that He later devastated the world in a great flood, saving only faithful Noah and his family. Afterward, when sinful pride gained the upper hand among Noah's descendants, God delivered judgment, introducing varieties of human languages and scattering the human race throughout the world in separate cultural settlements. God chose from among these a people for His own and kept alive among them the promise of a Savior who would come to save all people from their sins. This promise continued a promise initially given to our first parents, Adam and Eve, after the very first sin.

By His own hand, God wrote the Ten Commandments by which He desired His people to live and delivered them to His people through the prophet Moses. Through the years, God continually communicated with the people through other prophets, telling them about their sin and its harsh consequences and about the Savior who would come to take all human sin and its consequences upon Himself.

Moses and other writers recorded the history of God's saving actions among His people together with His promises as God's Spirit gave them the very words, thoughts, and ideas to record. "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

Finally, Jesus, the Savior, was born. The writer of Hebrews summarizes, "Long ago, at many times and in various ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son" (1:1–2). As He lived and served God and others in complete and flawless obedience, Jesus brought healing, truth, and peace to those touched by His love.

Through His Son, Jesus, God reconciled Himself and fallen humanity. Long ago, the apostle Paul wrote these words to describe our Savior to

Timothy: "There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5–6). Reconciled with our heavenly Father, we can now communicate regularly and even continuously with Him in prayer. In Jesus' name we may now "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended bodily into heaven, the Holy Spirit descended upon believers in Jerusalem. These believers then began to speak in languages they had not learned, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus' forgiveness and salvation to those of various cultures assembled there from all over the world. By God's grace, the barriers in communication that originated as judgment after the incident at Babel were set aside by the Holy Spirit so that people of all languages and cultures might learn of Jesus and believe in Him. As followers of God through faith in Christ Jesus, we carry on the work of those first Christian believers, joining in the task of bringing the Good News of His forgiveness and salvation to all people everywhere.

The Ability to Read

Our alphabet represents the letters used in the words we speak and write to convey meaning. God has given us the ability to understand the sounds and symbols we combine and manipulate in our language to form words, sentences, paragraphs, and books. God has blessed us with people who have translated the most significant of all books—the Bible—into our own language so that we can read, hear, and learn the Word of God. In His Word, God tells us about Himself, specifically about His person and nature and the salvation He freely offers through His Son. Further, God invites and commands us to read and study His Word as the very means through which He gives us His gifts.

Considering the meaning and influence God's Word had in the life of a young man named Timothy, Paul reflects, "From childhood you

Using the Twelve Standards for the English Language Arts Developed by the IRA/NCTE

The International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) have developed twelve standards for the English language arts. These organizations believe that English language arts standards must be grounded in what we know about language and language learning. If the standards do not have this very important foundation, then they could undermine our nation's commitment to educating all students and to emerging conceptions of literacy. The standards presented here grew out of current research and theory about how students learn—in particular, how they learn language.

The vision guiding these standards is that all students must have the opportunity and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue their life's goals and to participate fully as informed, productive members of society. These standards assume that literacy growth begins before children enter school as they experience and experiment with literacy activities: reading, writing, and associating spoken words with their graphic representations. Recognizing this fact, these standards encourage the development of curriculum and instruction that make productive use of the emerging literacy abilities that children bring to school. Furthermore, the standards provide ample room for the innovation and creativity essential to teaching and learning. They are not prescriptions for particular curriculum or instruction.

The IRA and the NCTE have given permission for the standards to be included in Concordia Language Arts Curriculum Guides and to be elaborated upon to incorporate elements of the Christian faith. These English language arts standards are included as follows, together with a discussion of how these standards may be uniquely applied in Lutheran schools.

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. **Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.**

God has gifted humans with amazing intellectual capacities. Among these is the ability to represent thoughts and concepts as symbols and to record information through these symbols so that it may be retrieved by the recorder or by others at a later time. Through reading and writing, we communicate with purposes of informing, enlightening, entertaining, and motivating. Through the words God Himself has caused to be written, we have come to know not only God's will for our lives, but also the means of salvation He offers freely through His Son, our Savior.

Because we are able to read, we are able to learn about life in other periods of time, including the beginning of the human experience in the Garden of Eden and the eternal joy we will one day know and forever experience in heaven. We can read about life in other parts of the world and about our explorations into the reaches of space.

Very young children can experience print as they interact with story books and other age-appropriate materials. They can take part in discussions about the characters and plot and project what they think may happen next as the story unfolds. As parents, siblings, and caregivers read and tell stories from the Bible, children learn about God's power and might and their uniqueness as children individually loved, created, and saved by God.

As children grow, they learn to experience increasing varieties of reading materials from numerous contexts and written for many purposes. These include the Bible and devotional material, articles, books, novels, newspaper and magazine articles, poetry, plays, personal and family documents, reference materials, journals, letters, and games.

Spoken and visual texts also assist students in learning the interconnectedness of various forms of communication. As children grow, they do well when encouraged to read those texts that are relevant, in line with individual interests, and at various levels so that they are able to both improve reading fluency and experience the challenge and mastery of more difficult texts.

Through a variety of reading materials, children will be able to recognize and reflect upon the elements common among all people. All are under the curse of sin and need a Savior. Jesus Christ came to redeem and save all people. Long ago, He took upon Himself the punishment for all the sins ever committed. Understanding these things helps the children of God to share the Good News of Jesus with those who have not yet heard and do not yet believe.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

Like a good friend, a good book teaches us about the world, about others, and about ourselves. Literary works record the essence of humanity. Through many literary genres, the human experience is recorded and finds creative expression.

As children experience a variety of genres, they become familiar with metaphor, imagery, rhyme, and other figurative devices. They learn to identify and understand characters and plot, conflict and tension, climax and resolution. They become able to differentiate between fantasy and reality, fact and fiction.

Literary texts provide students with the opportunity to grow as they reflect on the dilemmas faced by others, their actions, and the consequences

that result from these actions. As children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, students can learn to discern whether a character's attitudes, actions, and behaviors reflect the old sinful nature into which all of us are born or the new nature imparted to believers in Baptism, which God's Spirit daily causes to arise. They can learn to understand that each follower of Jesus remains simultaneously saint and sinner and needs the forgiveness and strength our God promises to impart through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).






As children grow in reading proficiency, many different skills and understandings come into play. Children realize what they must give to the reading process in order to achieve the desired result. In becoming familiar with a variety of genres, they come to know what each genre will require of them. They come to know, for example, that locating information in a phone book requires a different skill set than reading a short story—although both require the ability to work with words. Children also need to acquire a variety of strategies for understanding and evaluating spoken and visual language. Comprehension occurs when readers are able to take in and process information correctly and appropriately and to make the necessary application of this knowledge in their life.

Ongoing dialogue that occurs throughout the reading process helps students to make predictions and then to modify their predictions as more information or clues become available. Finally, they are able to reach conclusions and explain their conclusions by virtue of what they have read. Students demonstrate the ability to interpret text when they apply its meaning in their lives. They evidence competency in evaluat-

CHAPTER 4

Language Arts Curriculum Standards for Students in Grade 4

This chapter includes language arts standards that have been compiled from the individual state departments of education. They are organized, grade by grade, into the following five areas:

1. Reading 
2. Literature 
3. Writing 
4. Speaking, Listening, and Viewing (Media Literacy) 
5. World Languages 

The Concordia standards have been systematized according to the following numerical designations to indicate grade level, area, category, and performance objective:

The first digit indicates the grade level (e.g., the 2 in 2.5.1.3 designates that the performance expectation is for grade 2).

The second digit indicates the area of language arts, as listed above, addressed by the standard (e.g., the 5 in 2.5.1.3 designates that the standard is in the area of World Languages).

The third digit identifies a category within the area. These categories are the same at every grade level (e.g., the 1 in 2.5.1.3 relates to the category *Use the target language to develop an understanding of customs, arts, literature, history, and geography associated with its use*, which is the first category of World Languages at every grade level).

The fourth digit indicates the number of the specific performance expectation. These expectations will vary from level to level (e.g., 2.5.1.3, as found in the World Languages area of the grade 2 standards relating to the category *Use the target language to develop an understanding of customs, arts, literature, history, and geography associated with its use*, refers to the third item in that category).

Chapter 5 provides faith-integration activities organized by category. These activities provide many opportunities to teach aspects of the Christian faith in conjunction with each area of the language arts curriculum. Each activity is keyed to a specific performance expectation.

A complete list of language arts standards performance expectations for this grade level is provided on the remaining pages of this chapter.








- 4.1 Fourth-grade students will acquire reading skills and fluency to gain information and ideas, while using strategies for constructing meaning that connect what is read to present understandings so as to build a strong foundation for growth as lifelong learners.**
- 4.1.1 Develop reading proficiency.**
- 4.1.1.1 Read narrative and expository text with grade-appropriate fluency, accuracy, and comprehension, adjusting to the difficulty and type of text.
 - 4.1.1.2 Read narrative and expository text aloud with appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression.
 - 4.1.1.3 Read independently.
- 4.1.2 Build an extensive vocabulary.**
- 4.1.2.1 Determine meaning through context.
 - 4.1.2.2 Apply knowledge of word origins, derivations, synonyms, antonyms, and idioms to determine word meaning and the meaning of phrases.
 - 4.1.2.3 Use knowledge of common roots and affixes derived from Greek and Latin to analyze the meaning of complex words.
 - 4.1.2.4 Recognize and explain words with multiple meanings.
 - 4.1.2.5 Show how to use the thesaurus, dictionary, and glossary to determine related words and concepts.
 - 4.1.2.6 Identify the meaning of abbreviations.
- 4.1.3 Comprehend what is read.**
- 4.1.3.1 Apply pre-reading strategies and set a purpose to aid in comprehension.
 - 4.1.3.2 Apply post-reading skills, including reflecting, analyzing, and drawing conclusions.
 - 4.1.3.3 Comprehend using structural patterns within informational text, such as compare and contrast, cause and effect, and sequential or chronological order.
 - 4.1.3.4 Identify the main ideas and supporting details of a text.
 - 4.1.3.5 Explain the author's perspective and mood.
 - 4.1.3.6 Understand similes, metaphors, analogies, onomatopoeia, and alliteration.
- 4.1.4 Read for a purpose.**
- 4.1.4.1 Interpret and apply information in the title, table of contents, illustrations, chapter headings, and glossary.
 - 4.1.4.2 Identify a topic and gather information from various sources.
 - 4.1.4.3 Apply information to specific tasks and understandings, such as those relating to a future career.
- 4.1.5 Distinguish types of text.**
- 4.1.5.1 Recognize the text features and purposes of fiction, poetry, and drama.
 - 4.1.5.2 Distinguish between fact and opinion in expository text.
 - 4.1.5.3 Identify and explain connections between ideas, information, and relationships in fiction and nonfiction works; between text ideas and own experiences; and between ideas and cultural and historic time frames.
 - 4.1.5.4 Examine the theme and organizing structure of texts.

CHAPTER 5

Information and Activities for Integrating the Faith as Keyed to Grade 4 Standards

The language arts standards included in this chapter have been compiled from the individual state departments of education and organized, grade by grade, into the following five areas:

1. Reading 
2. Literature 
3. Writing 
4. Speaking, Listening, and Viewing (Media Literacy) 
5. World Languages 

The Concordia standards have been systematized according to the following numerical designations to indicate grade level, area, category, and performance objective as described in chapter 4.

Performance expectations are numbered sequentially (e.g., 2.5.1.3 is found in grade 2, in the area of World Languages, relating to the category *Use the target language to develop an understanding of customs, arts, literature, history, and geography associated with its use*, and is the third item in that category). A complete list of language arts standards performance expectations for this grade is provided in chapter 4.

On the pages of chapter 5, you will find an easy-to-reference two-column format for faith integration with the language arts standards. The left-hand column under the heading “Information by Topic” provides helpful teaching background information and insights relevant for integrating some aspect of the Christian faith. The number following the topic identifies the performance expectation to which the topic relates (see chapter 4). Beside each entry, in the right-hand column under the heading “Discussion Points/Activities,” you will find ideas helpful for planning and organizing student learning experiences that reinforce and expand upon these faith connections.

Be sure to consult the index at the end of this volume for a complete listing of topics and where they may be found.



4.1 Fourth-grade students will acquire reading skills and fluency to gain information and ideas, while using strategies for constructing meaning that connect what is read to present understandings so as to build a strong foundation for growth as lifelong learners.

4.1.1 Develop reading proficiency.

Reading with Fluency, Accuracy, and Comprehension

Narrative text is written in story or prose form. Narrative text can be fiction or nonfiction. Expository text is nonfiction writing that explains something. It is informative and factual. In the New Testament Scriptures, much of the Gospel texts are written as narratives—stories of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. On the other hand, the New Testament Epistles are largely expository, explaining the message of the Gospel to build up our faith in our Savior Jesus. The pace of reading is usually faster for narrative than for expository text. Expository text usually requires a more careful reading in order to comprehend all the details, explanations, and reports. Encourage students to adjust their pace of reading to fit the type of content and purpose. Fluency, accuracy, and comprehension of either type of text is helped by preparing for reading in advance through exploring the meaning and pronunciation of new words. It is also important to set a purpose for reading in advance to direct student focus, intent, and motivation. (4.1.1.1)

- Bible resources come in various formats. Explore a Bible story book, Bible encyclopedia, and Bible dictionary. The first uses narrative style, the second is expository, and the third is a tool. Each serves a different purpose. The pace and intent of reading will also vary according to the purpose. You are not likely to read page after page of a dictionary. It is a tool that you use for a specific task, such as learning the meaning of the word *Sacrament*, and then you are done. What differences do you observe in the style of writing and the way that you read a narrative in a Bible storybook compared to reading expository text in a Bible encyclopedia? (You are likely to read a narrative smoothly and quickly because of the flow of the story and the single plot. You are likely to read the article in the Bible encyclopedia a little slower because you are paying close attention to the many details that are given.) Each type of writing serves a different but important purpose.
- Read about the Passover in Exodus 12:1–28. This is expository text that lists many details. Make a list of the details involved in the celebration of the first Passover. Can you rewrite this text as a narrative? Try writing it as a story as if you were there, observing all that is happening. As an alternative, read a narrative about the Passover from a Bible story book.

Reading Aloud with Expression

As students are becoming more independent in their reading skills, focusing even more on comprehension than on simple word identification, do not neglect the skills needed for oral reading. This is a lifelong skill that continues to need development. Oral reading skills involve different purposes than silent reading. In this task, students need to focus on appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression. Their focus moves to the needs of the

- Assign fourth graders a younger student (a kindergartener or first grader) as a reading partner. Have the fourth-grade students choose an Arch® Book or another Bible story to practice and then to read aloud to their younger reading partners on an assigned day. This could be done several times throughout the year corresponding to a different season of the Church Year, different parables or Old Testament stories, or a different



INFORMATION BY TOPIC

audience. Look for opportunities throughout the day that encourage functional oral reading. The more practice students have in reading aloud, the more confidence they will have to do so effectively in settings outside the classroom.

Discuss the blessing and privilege we have in that God has entrusted us to share His Word with others. God uses people as His instruments (see Acts 9:15) to speak His Word, but it is the Word that has the power to change hearts and lives. John 5:24 says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes . . . has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” Romans 10:17 says, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” There is no greater word to read or speak aloud to someone than the message of salvation in Christ Jesus! (4.1.1.2)

DISCUSSION POINTS/ACTIVITIES

event in the life of Christ. Tell the fourth graders as they do this task that they have “beautiful feet!” Romans 10:15 says, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” And that Good News is the Gospel of Jesus. Have each person draw a picture of his or her feet (either bare feet or feet with shoes on). Then, point out that the Bible verse is indicating that we are the messengers carrying an important message. We are the “method of transportation.” God blesses us and appreciates our work, but we are just the “feet.” It is God’s Word—the message—that is most important. Through the Word, the Holy Spirit works faith, forgiveness, and new life in the people who hear the message. (Practicing reading aloud helps us to have “beautiful feet.”)

- God has used many great speakers throughout history to make a positive difference in the world or in the social and political life of the United States. Choose one great speaker to research. Find a brief description of this character and the setting in which an influential speech was made. Present this brief description to the class as an introduction to reading a quotation from this person’s speech. Some possible characters: Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy, Winston Churchill, George Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, Ronald Reagan, Martin Luther, the current president of the nation or governor of the state.

Independent Reading

Just as our goal in education is not just that students learn but also that they develop a love of learning, so also with reading we want students to learn to read, but we also want them to develop a love of reading. One of the ways to encourage this is to continue the practice of reading aloud to your students at least 15 minutes each day. This should be a time devoted to listening (no multitasking). Many children, upon hearing a high-interest story, will want to read the story themselves or will want to read other books in the series or by the same author. Another important technique is to continue the practice of having at least fifteen minutes per day for silent reading. Set a timer for the read-

- Unfortunately, an effective way to kill off a love of reading is to require an excessive amount of book reports or to assign very complicated book reports. Don’t develop an attitude toward reading and writing in your students similar to this incident: At the first sign of snow that year, a teacher invited her fourth graders to go to the windows to watch the snowfall. One boy remained at his desk and shouted out to the other students, “Don’t go! Don’t look! If you do, she’ll make you write about it.” This is poignant, but it is also sad that writing had become such a burden that it took the joy out of other experiences. Likewise, the main benefit of book reporting happens when one child is excited

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