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God's Covenantal Family | Genesis 37 & 39:1-10

The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. So Joseph found favour in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had...



Pastor's Blog | *The Fight to Read*

As a child the telly was pretty restricted in our house, not that there was that much on anyway. Dad controlled the remote so it was usually ABC news and current affairs or nothing!

That was fine: my 'nothing' was reading. I could sit for hours and hours and devour books, often getting in trouble for sneaking a book and torch under the covers after bed time. It never seemed like serious trouble though: mum seemed to like describing me as a book worm. Now as a mid-forties pastor, I seem to find reading harder. Yes, ploughing through 'Biggles goes to Borneo' is easier than most helpful christian

books, and yes, I am much busier now than I was then. Even so, I think there is something else going on.

A recent article entitled 'Readings Wars' by Phillip Yancey resonated with me. In it, he describes how his formerly solid reading habits had been eroded to a substantial degree - how he reads fewer books now and even fewer of the ones that require hard work. He writes,

A dopamine rush occurs when we learn something new and quick, and the internet plays on this to teach us to constantly skip and move on, making it harder and harder to concentrate on sustained prose. The internet is literally changing our brains.



The internet and social media have trained my brain to read a paragraph or two, and then start looking around. When I read an online article from The Atlantic or The New Yorker, after a few paragraphs I glance over at the slide bar to judge the article's length. My mind strays, and I find myself clicking on the sidebars and the underlined links. Soon I'm over at CNN.com reading Donald Trump's latest Tweets and details of the latest terrorist attack, or perhaps checking tomorrow's weather.'

He then describes the neurological realities of what's going on - how a dopamine rush occurs when we learn something new and quick, and the internet plays on this to teach us to constantly skip and move on, making it harder and harder to concentrate on sustained prose. The internet is literally changing our brains.

Yancey again: *'In The Gutenberg Elegies, Sven Birkerts laments the loss of "deep reading," which requires intense concentration, a conscious lowering of the gates of perception, and a slower pace. His book hit me with the force of conviction, intensifying my sense of crisis. I keep putting off Charles Taylor's 'A Secular Age', and look at my shelf full of Jürgen Moltmann's theology books with a feeling of nostalgia - why am I not reading books like that now?'*

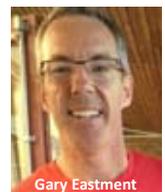
I feel something of this slide also.

Now we live in an electronic age. I'm not about to say we should resist owning or using iPads or computers. I have three devices myself, and although I could live without them I wouldn't like to: they're modern day tools which, used wisely, make me more effective in my work. However, just like anything else, there is a downside and Yancey is putting his finger on one of aspect of it. I need to resist the re-training of my brain, and to fight to keep my reading deep and consistent.

Yancey mentions a **'fortress of habits'**. With him, I like this image: *'I've concluded that a commitment to reading is an ongoing battle, somewhat like the battle against the seduction of internet pornography. We have to build a fortress with walls strong enough to withstand the temptations of that powerful dopamine rush while also providing shelter for an environment that allows deep reading to flourish. Christians especially need that sheltering space, for quiet meditation is one of the most important spiritual disciplines.'*

My fortress of habits includes no games, hard copy Bible (for other reasons as well, but no distractions is significant), apps that block the web for periods of time, keeping a reading list (to know where I'm heading next in a planned way makes it easier to keep moving). One area I always want to do but rarely get to, is blocking time in my diary. I must work on that. I must do this for my kids as well. They're book worms now, but the battle over screen time has long ago been joined in the Eastment house. We hope to keep them reading deeply (with books we point them to), in the best of wisdoms, to set up life long habits.

What would your fortress of reading habits look like? Here's a suggestion: resolve to read. It doesn't matter if you're slow, or find it hard. Acknowledge that and get on with it. Buy a book from the Bookstall (now in the old entrance foyer area). Ask for Gus or my help with choosing if you like. And then start! Start reading, build a habit, construct a fortress. Fight to read.



Upcoming & Notes



- **Women's Spring Breakfast @ Booloominbah 8.00am Saturday October 14** > A delicious breakfast, good conversation and a short talk from Vanessa DeSauty (NEGS Chaplain). \$15pp at the door. RSVP essential to Tam 0431 092 152 or taminarmidale@gmail.com by October 10.
- **Renee Thomas (SunAM) on Thailand mission trip 9.30am Thurs Oct 12** > @ St Peter's Cathedral Mothers Union meeting. RSVP to Ruth Thomas 6772 5001 for catering.
- **St Marks uneChurch Family Prayer meeting 11.30am-12.30pm Sunday Oct 15** > @ SMMC. Plan to be there!
- **'Coalition for Marriage' letterbox drop helpers** > If you're able and willing to help disseminate to other parts of Armidale, contact Brian Sindel 0423 267 376.
- **Confirmation with Bishop Rick Lewers Oct 22** > Contact Matt in the Office 6787 4015.
- **Women's Reading Group Friday 7.15pm October 27 @ Tam's (12 Jayne Close)** > '*None Like Him*' books available via Tam or on the 'Connect Table' at church. Cost \$13.50 (to Tam).
- **'Parenting in a Connected Age' workshop 9.30am-3.15pm Saturday Oct 28** > @ Sandon Primary School with James and Simone Boswell (authors of '*Cyber Parenting: Raising Your Kids in an Online World*'). For parents of toddlers up to teens. RSVP to Ruth France bandrfrance@gmail.com or 0490 669 157.

CYBERPARENTING

- **Authentic Indian Food Cooking Demo & Luncheon 11.00am - 2.30pm Sat Oct 28** > @ St Mary's Anglican Church Hall (286 Rusden St). \$12pp (\$6 student). RSVP to Polly Wong 0431 406 371 or polly@stpetersarmidale.org.au
- **Church Family Weekend Away @ Scotts Head 18 -20 May (Friday-Sunday) 2018** > Stick it in your calendar/diary now!

Family Prayer

- **Baking** > Izzy & Aidan Willams (due March).
- **Betrothed** > Ben Lukins & Laura Millican (Dec 9); Ali Lockyer & Dan Sole (Jan 13); Mitch Buster & Emma Austrin-Miner (Apr 21); Natasha Wiggins & David James (Mar).
- **'Tent' Wear & Repair** (2 Cor. 5) > Bill Bruce; David Meares; Owen Chapman.
- **SunAM Prayer Ministry** > See Robert Baker.

Family Finances

Giving 15/9-21/9	\$7,904
Average amount needed to meet Budget per week	\$8,484
Overall Giving 1/7-7/9	\$106,711
Average amount needed to meet Budget for this period	\$98,978

