

Voices: The importance of a good book

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One of the resolutions many of us make as we begin a new year is to slow down. We are all far too busy.

I believe the constant noise of our lives is doing unfathomable damage to our souls. The constant connectedness of our lives through our phones, computers and televisions can keep us from paying attention to the work of God in our lives and the world around us.

If you don't think we have a problem, look around the restaurant next time you go out to eat and count the number of people on their phones. We are missing God's world and his kingdom at work.

I am as guilty of this as anyone. One of the ways I have tried to combat the distraction-filled pits of technology is by setting aside more time to read.

Reading a physical book helps me slow down. It helps me pay attention more to the world around me. Specifically, what has been so beneficial for my soul these last few months is a commitment to read more fiction.

Good books dwell on beauty, truth and goodness

When Paul calls us to dwell on "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable," (Philippians 4:8) the underlying implication is God's beauty, truth and goodness are everywhere.

If we only have eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to receive, we could see the love and faithfulness of God at work in the world.

A good novel can help us open our eyes, ears and hearts to what is true and lovely in the world.

Good books help us see, hear and feel other people

We must understand one another and our experiences in this world. We are all created in the image of God. This truth gives every human value and worth. Novels open up the human heart and experience in a way nothing else quite can.

A good story slows us down and helps us pay attention to God at work in his world by helping us understand the depth and complicated nature of humanity.

In a good story, we learn about different cultures, different experiences and different points of view. Fiction takes us into someone else's world, mind and heart and can help us grow in empathy for others made in the image of God.

Fiction not only can help us pay attention to the people around us and maybe help us understand one another a little more, but it also can form us to pay attention to the rest of the world around us.

Well-written fiction is filled with descriptive language that makes the world come alive. It helps us see the beauty of the world in places we often see and places we may never visit physically.

Read books that will challenge you to slow down and take a second look at the world.

What good books can do that other media can't

Books expand our vision of the world. Books open the world up to us much more than our phones and the ever-shrinking community and influences we have on social media. Books can push us out of our comfort zone and help us think about this world in a new way.

Likewise, God can communicate to us through good narrative. He is a storytelling God, and his truth, goodness and beauty are everywhere—even in fiction.

Read good fiction this year

Visit your local library. Ask for recommendations. Turn off the television, put away your phone and open a book. Take a break from the constant noise cluttering your soul and spend some time paying attention to God at work in the world with the help of a good story. See God's beauty, truth and goodness at work in those made in his image and in his good creation. Be challenged to see things in a new way.

Slow down and read. You may find yourself reading more than a book.

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