

Why Literature and Being a Well-Read Mom Matters

Episode 262

Rachel Winchester [00:00:02]:

In the busyness of caring for and educating our kids, we can easily fall out of a habit of reading for ourselves. Perhaps you never were much of a reader, or maybe you don't know what to read. Regardless, reading literature feeds the mind of the mother and is essential for carrying out our work. Today, we're talking about being a well read mom. You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively and enjoyably. Carol Joy Seid has been helping families homeschool for several decades through her literature based approach to education. In this episode, Carol is joined by Marcy Stockman, the founder of the well read mom, a ministry that helps women read more and read well.

Rachel Winchester [00:00:47]:

If you're looking to be freshly inspired in your reading life, this episode is for you. Listen in.

Carole Joy Seid [00:00:54]:

Welcome, friends. I am just getting my birthday wish today even though my birthday isn't till July. But I can pretend it's my birthday because I am meeting with my friend, Marcy Stockman, and I know that we've known each other over the years, but I don't remember the details. But Marcy does. So welcome, miss Marcy.

Marcy Stockman [00:01:15]:

Hi, Carol. Yes. I am a long time, Carol's side workshop van, and I don't think I would have kept homeschooling if it weren't for you.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:26]:

Oh my goodness. So did you come to some

Marcy Stockman [00:01:29]:

of our city in Minneapolis? Minneapolis and also Yeah. Maybe maybe Chicago area once. I traveled with some of my friends to see you, and it was at a time when homeschooling was being pioneered, you know, in the early days, and people thought

we were crazy, and I was worried about, you know, so and you just had a way of encouraging us to stay with it, and we weren't we weren't ruining our kids, and you gave me so much courage, Carol, and you introduced me to great books.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:03]:

Oh, praise the Lord. And now I'm reaping the benefits in your life because you have surpassed me.

Marcy Stockman [00:02:12]:

We my friends and I, we wrote down all the books and we started reading along with our children, just one step ahead of them, sometimes half a step, sometimes in the same stride, because you know you don't have to be an expert to homeschool and to live life with your children, and God is with you. And, anyway, you have helped hundreds and hundreds of women with courage to take that step. So and then I did a few sessions with you, for consultation because I helped my kid with courage.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:47]:

I knew I knew you. And I don't do you remember how many years ago?

Marcy Stockman [00:02:51]:

Oh, it was a long time, maybe twenty, twenty five years ago. I homeschooled for thirty years. And, yeah, it's

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:01]:

How many how many children and how old are they now?

Marcy Stockman [00:03:05]:

They're, seven children, and the oldest, I think, is 38 or 39. He's Yep. You know, a spine surgeon. So, you know, his kids are

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:14]:

spine surgeon. I need him. Tell him to get over here. My back hurts.

Marcy Stockman [00:03:17]:

Right. No. No. No. But I'm not saying that. I'm saying that to say, you know, all of the worries and spreading I did and learning to trust in the Lord. And, you know, I have kids with, learning disabilities, and and they're making it. And it's and, anyway, they're all lovely and and each other's best friends, and I'm just so so grateful.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:43]:

Oh, Marcy. You're just encouraging me so much. Wow. Well, your ministry is encouraging me. Let's talk about it. So I have to tell a fun story on on how the Lord brought me to your ministry. So I have a friend named Julie Balmer, and she lives in Duluth, Minnesota. And she is just a kindred spirit.

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:05]:

She's the reason I do all day seminars because years ago, she heard me speak at the convention in Minneapolis, and she called me up and said, I can't stop talking about you. Please would you come here to Duluth so my friends will get a break because they're getting really annoyed about hearing about it, what she had heard at the convention. And she said, would you do an all day seminar? And I said, I've been wanting to do that because I feel it lays a better foundation than just speaking for forty five minutes. So that was the first time I did that, and I don't know how many years ago. My son's 45, and he was maybe 10 or 11 years old. So it you know, it was a very long time ago. And so the other day and we stayed friends all these years. She's one of my most trusted prayer partners.

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:52]:

So one day, we're talking on the phone. She said, oh, I'm in a new book club. And I thought, oh, like, reading best sellers. And she goes, oh, no. Oh, no. It's called well read mom. Well, she had me right at the title. I'm like, what? Tell me more.

Carole Joy Seid [00:05:08]:

And then she started telling me about the whole model. So I want you to tell our listeners how you created this ministry and and, you know, your principles, your pattern of how people participate in this because it's very unique and very curated, and there's just an excellence to what you do. So tell tell us about how this began, please.

Marcy Stockman [00:05:33]:

Well, thank you, Carol. You know, I was just a few years behind you because your JJ, I believe, was playing a lot of basketball in seventh grade or something. He'd finish and go to the gym. Anyway, that was about the age I came to your first workshop. But anyway, so when I was homeschooling and it was and my my oldest daughter got married, and she called me one day. She had her first child. They had little Catherine, and she said, mom, and and I heard this cry of loneliness in her voice, and she said, I I'm not going back to this mother's group. Like, they're just talking about their kids, what kind of diaper, what you know? Right.

Marcy Stockman [00:06:15]:

Everything is about the kids, and isn't there a place where women get together and talk about the real questions of life? And I knew she was hungering for friendship, and I knew she was lonely in those early years of motherhood. And even homeschooling is can be really lonely, you know, at times for for the woman. And and at the same time, I was giving a few talks up north in Northern Minnesota where I lived to mothers of preschoolers, MOPS, I think they called it back then. Yes. And I I spoke on, you know, some things like good good literature that I'd read to my children, and they said, Can you come back? And I said, Okay. And they said, Speak on anything. I just called the talk Warat Mom. And I started to talk, I put together a talk on the importance of reading, but Carol, I had fallen away from reading as my kids were older and could do more independently, like reading for pleasure, reading quality literature for pleasure had fallen by the wayside.

Marcy Stockman [00:07:16]:

And so when I was giving this talk to mothers and I realized that the three times I gave it, I drove home sad because the women weren't reading. They were reading nothing. Some most of them were reading nothing, and of course, the number one reason I don't have time. Others were reading, the Bible, of course, or spiritual classics, or something, with their spiritual life, or a parenting book, but no one was reading literature. Not one woman was reading quality literature for its own sake. And so I drove home sad thinking these women have enough guilt or, you know, on that that comes at them, like I'm failing here, here's another place. And I was just there saying, look, here's here, I'm here to point out one more one more way you're failing, you know? Now you're not reading, you know, these great classics. And I did not want to do that at all.

Marcy Stockman [00:08:12]:

And so I realized when Beth called that day with her loneliness that I wanted to get back into reading more and reading well and a place of meaningful connection with other women, a place of friendship, a place where we're encouraged to live out our vocation as wives and mothers or or women, you know, as all women. And so just that her desire and my desire to read more and read well merged and Well Red Mom was born. So that that's how it started.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:47]:

Did you have a group of ladies that you launched it with, or you just did it on your own? How did you begin?

Marcy Stockman [00:08:54]:

So I said, Beth, why don't you you get some friends together in Saint Paul. I will I will get some friends together, and and I'll take a risk here. We made this postcard. Well read mom. The the name was there right from the start. It's like it popped into my mind. And I said, I'll create a five year book list. And I I said look, I'll I'll do a little audio to introduce it.

Marcy Stockman [00:09:18]:

You know, when you've when you've homeschooled a long time, you learn a lot, Carol. Yes. And you know, I still feel like an amateur, and I still am an amateur, and I'll never be an academic, but but I realize these books are for my life. Amen. Even I even when I don't understand them, and most of it in the great books, like we read the Aeneid this year, still so much goes over my head, but it still feeds my soul somehow. Right? And layer upon layer you come to understand more, make another connection. But, so when, so I took a five, I took all these books that I bought at your workshops and other places, piled them on my rug in the living room, and so I had 150 books. So I'm coming up with a five year book list, okay? So I've got all these books in stacks on my rug, and I start to get discouraged because I thought, how are we gonna order these books for five years? You know, do we start with the ancient epics of the Greeks and the Romans and read Homer and the Aeneid and Saint Augustine's confessions and and in order, logically.

Marcy Stockman [00:10:29]:

And then and then I just I thought, wow, you know, I don't really wanna be in this book club, you know? I just thought it would be too much. Too heavy. Too heavy. Like asking women to run a marathon when really Yeah.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:44]:

Or take cod liver oil.

Marcy Stockman [00:10:46]:

Yes. Yes. You know, we need I want this to be a place where everyone can succeed, yet we raise the bar.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:53]:

Yeah. I love that.

Marcy Stockman [00:10:54]:

We raise the bar without crushing anyone. So if you've never read a novel, a great work of literature, you read what you can. Chew on what you can. You know, I used to put books up by the kitchen sink and read a paragraph or two.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:11]:
While you're doing the dishes.

Marcy Stockman [00:11:13]:
Yeah. And, you know, often I was in a classic book club way back for about for ten years, and that's also where I was disciplined to read these kind of books. Yeah. But I realized I was living better in the pages of these books. These kind of books were changing me, so it it's worth the effort to cultivate a taste for true art It's true.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:37]:
Literary art. It's true. Things that have richness. Well so, Marcy, when I first, went online and joined Well Read Mom, Then you as you know, you have a magnificent ministry, your website, your the art that you use, the little bookmark that you sent us with Van Gogh's, reproduction of of, was it, Courbaix? The father reaching his arm out to the son. And I just I saw the art, and I thought, oh, this is my tribe. These are my people. And then I got once you join, then you get to see the book list from from the past. And the very first book, I don't know if you realize how it comes out on the website, but the first book on your lists from the very first day you started was the hawk and the dove.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:29]:
And I thought, oh, I don't believe it. These people are my people. And I called Julie and I said, do you know what the very first book Marcy ever chose? And I'm reading the list and you have Elizabeth Gooch and you have all my people. I'm like, this is my twin separated from birth. I just couldn't believe it. I loved it.

Marcy Stockman [00:12:52]:
I learned those authors from you, Carol. They bought those books at your workshop.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:57]:
Well, I never put that together in my mind. I just thought it was a miracle, like being struck by a meteorite. I couldn't believe when I read your book list. Oh, Marcy, you have enriched my life. Tell so then talk about how you decided so so you launched it, and then what happened? What what happened after that?

Marcy Stockman [00:13:16]:
When I was trying to figure out how to order the books, I I just was praying. And at a certain point, I I read, Pope John Paul's letter to women. Yes. And now in that letter encouraging women, he thanked women in their various capacities. You know, it was

simple, a simple paragraph. Thank you women who work. Thank you women who are contemplative. Thank you women who are daughters and wives and mothers.

Marcy Stockman [00:13:43]:

And and really calling forth women in their feminine genius, in their capacity as women to

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:52]:

Excellent.

Marcy Stockman [00:13:53]:

That what they're doing matters, and it it's for the kingdom of God. Right. Anyway, it just hit me. Let's order the years according to the capacities of a woman. Like, every woman is a daughter. Mhmm. Every woman works. So we've done year of the artist, year of the contemplative, year of the, well, I better not say next year's.

Marcy Stockman [00:14:16]:

But anyway, this year we've veered off a bit with year of the father, and yet it relates because every woman is a daughter. That's right. So, and and it's also speaking, I think, to cultural we need we need to, grow in our understanding of the father.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:36]:

Yes. We do. And it has ministered my socks right off of me this year. The the books that we've been reading, I have felt like I was drinking out of a well of pure crystal water. And the women that I've met, which are all young, I'm the granny in the room, but these women are all young. One isn't even married yet. They're young, but they have little babies, and they are living in, the life of the mind, which is what I crave in fellowship and community, and you've created this. So then how did it go from your your daughter's friends to being in international ministry? What happened?

Marcy Stockman [00:15:21]:

So, Carol, I remember the day we made my other daughter-in-law, Jim, she's she was sitting at the table when we were talking about starting this, and she was gonna be in Beth's group. And she said, well, let's if we're gonna do something for women, like, if we're really gonna do this, let's it has to be beautiful. And Carol, I I I teared up at that point because I don't know. I still tear up because, you know, the women the women at home. Yes. Hidden away Yes. Doing this day in and day out, you know, diapers, pregnant, teaching our kids. We are completely hidden Yes.

Marcy Stockman [00:16:00]:

Yeah. For the for a certain time, certain amount of years, you know, it's like you're underground doing all of this work. And I wanted those women to get this little postcard to be blessed that it's beautiful. You know? Yep. I don't know. Just moves the socks off me because it's like we see you. We see you out there. Amen.

Marcy Stockman [00:16:22]:

And thank you for the work you're doing every every woman who's listening.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:26]:

That's right. That's right.

Marcy Stockman [00:16:29]:

So I had these 22 postcards I was gonna invite my friends, you know, which is which was so vulnerable actually because I thought, who am I? I mean, I'm not a literary scholar. I have no credentials in this, you know, and I'm dropping this postcard in the mailbox on Main Street where I live, to 22 women to say I'm choosing the books and I'm going to give the little intro on it, and you know, it just was crazy. And yet I realized that the Lord gives us desires. Mhmm. And, you know, hey, I wish I could be a biblical theologian, but I don't have that, you know? That's not my gift. And, for some reason, I had a huge desire to help women get together and share this together. And so I realized that women weren't reading and neither was I, and my desire increased while my hand was stuck in the post mailbox, and I looked at all of those postcards, and I thought, if I let go of these, this is really going to happen. And so I let go of them, and 22 women showed up, and WellRedMon began.

Marcy Stockman [00:17:55]:

And then it was a few months later, and a woman said, Hey, I heard about this. I have a woman's group we meet every week, but could we do this one week a month? Could you send us that little email that I would do the recording and send it to Beth? And I wrote up some questions in the email. So I started sending sending that to her, and then then we, Doctor. Mary Reichardt, who taught literature at St. Thomas in the Twin Cities, she she found out about it. She said she was super supportive and helped me with some lists when I told her I was doing wanted to really, really do a book club for women, and my daughter I mean, you know, it was just my daughter's club and me, but she said, well, I love, Sigrid Onset, and I would speak on that if you ever need someone to speak. And so

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:44]:

Okay. So tell the listeners who who that is and what is her most famous book.

Marcy Stockman [00:18:49]:

Sigrid Onset wrote, she received, I think, the Pulitzer Prize in 1923 along with the Nobel Prize in literature. And she's a a great woman's writer. And she have you read those, Carol? Yeah. Kristen.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:07]:

Only one. Only Kristen Lavender.

Marcy Stockman [00:19:09]:

Okay. But I

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:10]:

just was reading a catalog that listed some of her other books, and I went, oh, that will keep me busy for a long time.

Marcy Stockman [00:19:18]:

Right. And and the translator that has has really brought Kristen Lavazatter to life for for Americans is Tina Nunley. And she's she's just finished, some other works by Sigrid Ansett that are on her list. And earlier we read Ida Elizabeth, which is a book by Sigrid Ansett, and it's it's more of a modern story in the 1900s. But I received a letter from a woman, a woman from another state who who told me, she said, you know, I I had divorce papers ready ready to sign, and then I went to our mom and I didn't go because I wanted to read literature. I went because I wanted to be with these friends, these other women, and they were going and that I wanted to be with them. And this was a way, you know, you don't have to play phone tag, you don't have to you just know it's on the calendar. I'm gonna see these women, which is a real it's a blessing to us to have something set up.

Marcy Stockman [00:20:23]:

Anyway, she went to her first meeting, and it was a discussion of Ida, Ida Elizabeth. And she realized through reading that book that she needed to take another look at this, and it it, changed things for her in her decision. And Ah.

Carole Joy Seid [00:20:40]:

I don't know how she's doing. Book. A great book. It changes everything in your life. I mean, everything. I'm just so excited about your ministry. I can't even tell you. So then it went from 20 women in your living room, and then it multiplied and grew like Topsy.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:00]:

So people asked, could we do one in such and such location?

Marcy Stockman [00:21:05]:

Right. And and so after, doctor Reichardt spoke to us on Kristen Lamb's Day, and that was another step of faith because I thought, well, where are we going to have this? You know, why do stay at home moms have to go downstairs in a church basement? You know? Why can't we go somewhere? So I had a few children at this time at Saint Thomas, so I called Saint Thomas, and I said, yes, I lead a book club for women. And, doctor you know, anyway, again, you know, and and they let us use a room there. And so we hosted it at the University of Saint Thomas, and 81 women came. And I think twenty twenty groups started after that, something like that. So

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:49]:

Oh, this is an idea whose time has come. So let's talk about so when a woman joins your ministry, it's about, what, \$50, something like that. I can't remember.

Marcy Stockman [00:22:00]:

Is that right? Right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:01]:

And then tell, my listeners what what happens after that. What is that open for them?

Marcy Stockman [00:22:08]:

Well, I we're we're really membership based. So Yeah. The idea is you're taking part in something bigger. Because Right. Girl in the in my heart of hearts, I do believe women will play a part in bringing this country, raising the bar with it's gonna be women who are gonna we play a part in this, a big part in this, because what happens in the home ripples out into the culture. Amen. And so yeah. What what happens? Okay.

Marcy Stockman [00:22:41]:

They become a member, and then you receive the, companion, which

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:47]:

Yes.

Marcy Stockman [00:22:47]:

Is is what I have

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:48]:

one sitting right here, and it has the beautiful Van Gogh, work of art on the cover of a father reaching his hand out to his little baby and as the mother is kind of I it just makes

me cry. And and the color of it and everything about it, there's just such excellence and such beauty, which is just a core value of of my life. So, yes, so you get the companion guide, and it gives you your book list. Right?

Marcy Stockman [00:23:16]:

Right. Right. The companion is our core piece because it it tells why we why we selected it. Because we're looking at we wanna look at these books not not necessarily not from an ideological, you know, feminism view. We're looking at them from the view of the Christian tradition. You know, we're looking at books that have been written in the light of that tradition where evil is shown as evil and and there are consequences for it. And good, you see, I mean, hopefully in each book, you your desire for to move toward heroic virtue increases,

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:58]:

you know? That's right. Goodness is shown in a in a beautiful light that you want you're drawn to it. You're enchanted with goodness instead of kind of going, oh, gag me. That's so syrupy or something. Right?

Marcy Stockman [00:24:14]:

Yeah. And and the the imagination is educated. And and that that helps us. Like, we be I need to see things. I just need I I can read about rules or good thing, good rules, but when I see something through a work of literature, I mean for example, Kristin Lamazeader, okay? She is in trouble in her marriage, and there's a certain point in that story, I know a lot of in my group didn't like her husband, Erlin, but I liked it, and at a certain point, Kristen had closed her heart to him, and she won't let him back in, and you know, he's hurt her again and again, and and and it's understandable. But at a certain point, I thought, Kristen, you know, he's changed, and Mhmm. You've got your heart is hard, and and you're you're not welcoming him back. And, anyway, I just had this thought just for a moment, you know, you stop and ponder.

Marcy Stockman [00:25:20]:

That's a gift of reading with a book. Yes. I stopped to ponder that just for a minute, and I thought, you know, when my husband Pete comes home from work, I need to welcome him into family life. You know, that's something I Amen. I often you know, sometimes you're so busy and the husband walks in and you're like, you keep doing what you're doing with a child or whatever rather than stopping to greet them and really welcome them into the life of family. So I just had that thought, Carol. That was it. And a couple weeks later, you know, I'm chopping carrots for dinner, and and Pete comes over to the kitchen island and kinda puts his elbows on the island.

Marcy Stockman [00:25:57]:

He says, you know, Mars, I don't know if I'm imagining this or what, but you sure have been nicer to me lately.

Carole Joy Seid [00:26:11]:

Yeah. That it that's the power of a good book.

Marcy Stockman [00:26:15]:

It's such a simple example, but Beautiful.

Carole Joy Seid [00:26:20]:

Yeah. It's beautiful. It's true. Wow. I just love you. I I just can't believe that the Lord is reuniting our lives after all these years.

Marcy Stockman [00:26:30]:

Isn't it wonderful to work for the Lord? I mean, to have this great mission and have to be able to you know, he he brings us together and has our paths cross.

Carole Joy Seid [00:26:43]:

Yes. Oh my goodness. Well, Marcy, how about if you, pray for our listeners as we close? Would you do that?

Marcy Stockman [00:26:51]:

Yes. I would love to.

Carole Joy Seid [00:26:53]:

Thank

Marcy Stockman [00:26:54]:

you. Lord Jesus, we thank you for each and every one of these women listening. Thank you for their yes to you, and then their discouragement to get up again, to start again. I pray for your Holy Spirit to fill each mind and heart and soul. Give them strength, bless their families, bless their marriages. Lord God, may we commit to you with greater resolve. We are your women, Lord, and we love you. Amen.

Carole Joy Seid [00:27:35]:

Amen.

Marcy Stockman [00:27:38]:

So Carol, I wanted to let your listeners know that once a year starting April or anyone joins as a member, they can get this year's Year of the Father to finish the year with us and all of next year for the same price, so \$49.95 So we're really glad that we can offer that to get new people, you know, signed up and start start to read, and also start where you're at. No one fails. There's only one rule. If you don't get it read, don't apologize. But keep coming to the meetings. That's right. Stay with it because the more you come, the more you don't wanna miss out on on growing in beauty, truth, and goodness. So It's

Carole Joy Seid [00:28:21]:

true. And it it forces you to read hard things because it's the power it's just like having a workout buddy. If you know your friend is outside beeping the horn yet, you've gotta go to Pilates. You're like, but she's outside. I have to go because she's depending on me. So I go because I wanna be loyal to her, and then guess what? I get totally blessed. Right? That's the power of community.

Marcy Stockman [00:28:48]:

Yes. Amen. Amen.

Rachel Winchester [00:28:51]:

If you are interested in joining the Well Read Mom Book Club, they have a special offer going on now through 05/31/2025. When you sign up for the annual membership, you automatically get enrolled to next year's reading list as well. Check that out at wellreadmom.com forward slash join dash today. We know you are going to love these books and the community they build around reading. You've been listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. If you like what you heard in this episode, please leave a rating and review on Apple Podcasts or Spotify, or share this episode with a friend. It means so much when you help us spread the message of Homeschool Made Simple with others. Thanks for joining us this week on the Homeschool Made Simple podcast.

Rachel Winchester [00:29:36]:

Remember, Jesus' commandments are not burdensome. What he calls you to do, he will enable you to do. Blessings.