

## #16 Delphian Study

For all you mothers who sometimes feel like your brain is getting soggy or who regret never having gone to college, I have something to share with you that has the potential to fill your heart right up. I was at a library sale and picked up 10 volumes of an old 1913 series called The Delphian Reading Course. I had no idea the treasure I had just brought home for \$20.00.

Let me read to you from the Delphian handbook: “Woman has always recognized as her chief business the task of making the world a better place to live in—In civilization as well as in savagery men strive for the means of living, and women make the living worth striving for.” I know that’s not very politically correct in our world today. We’ve lost the idea that we need a balance of feminine and masculine working together and are trying to make men and women the same. But we are not the same. Women are softer and have been given divine gifts of nurturing. As part of that movement of elevating the role of women, the Delphian Society was formed in 1910 with the purpose of educating women. It was difficult for busy moms and wives to go away to college, so they brought college home to them. A Reading Course was designed that gave women the equivalent of a Bachelor’s Degree in Classic Studies, even if a woman could only spare 15 minutes a day.

The study included history, literature, philosophy, poetry, fiction, drama, art, ethics and music. The focus was on culture—it was a study for cultivating the heart. “To know the best that has been thought and said in the world” with the aim of personal improvement of each member who, in turn, would lift all of society. As they said, it was all about the business of life, not just learning of facts and information. It was about making of the mind, a mansion of all lovely thoughts.”

As the Delphian handbook says, “If a love for things worthwhile—the lasting and enduring thoughts and sentiments of men—increases, and the desire for wider knowledge is aroused, the hopes and ambitions of the Delphian Society shall have been largely realized.”

The name was inspired by the Delphian oracle of ancient Greece—a vaporous, voice of an unseen priestess who inspired wisdom and comfort. Doesn’t that describe the role of a woman—quiet whisperings to the heart of a child in the dark, words of encouragement to a discouraged husband. History books may not give her credit, but such quiet voices have influenced and even changed the course of history.

Understanding and appreciation were the objectives of the course. They were taught: “For the many problems that confront us, we need understanding, and for the enjoyment of all the beauty in which the world abounds, we need appreciation.”

When the reading course was first released, it was intended for individual study. But it soon became apparent that the study was so much more beneficial when women came together once a month to engage in conversation and share what they were learning and so Delphian chapters were formed. Within 20 years, there were over 2000 Delphian chapters operating across the nation. In the front of their new handbook are the words: “Ten small discussional groups in a

community will do more to create a new way of life than a hundred mass meetings with a thousand in attendance at each.”

“Who can estimate the value of these circles, which are multiplying throughout the country? Who can fail to see the possibility for the future in thus banding together earnest women of each community? Broader vision, fewer prejudices, greater tolerances must necessarily follow in the wake of centers where enthusiasm for a higher plane of thought is being enkindled. Everywhere are vast resources of the wealth that is most needed today, that of mind and spirit.”

If we would improve a community, we must first improve the individuals who make up the community. Libraries, art galleries, and museums would be waste in a village where none could read or write. To make them of any use, the individuals must be brought to improve themselves. And that is the focus of these study groups.

“When one busy housewife – I know–I hate that word too, so I’ll change it. When one busy mom “finds time to call over the telephone in order to discuss with her friend some phase of the Renaissance or a Bach fugue; or when the conversation turns from personalities to modern poetry, or art, we may then truthfully say that the interest in cultural subjects has become an everyday habit instead of an occasional diversion. And this is what invariably happens when two or three Delphians are gathered together.”

Women who were part of the Delphian movement turned knowledge into a living force in their everyday lives.

It was after learning all about this movement of women and the work of the Delphians that I called a couple of friends, Marley Billings and Jen Goostrey, and I said, “I think it’s time to help organize the moms.” They were already feeling it too, and Mothers of Influence was born. They had been meeting with a circle of friends for a couple of years and felt the power of those relationships in their lives. You’ll find a link to Mothers of Influence in Section Six of this course. It’s simple to become a mother of influence. It’s you and a friend and you grow from there.

But getting back to the Delphian Reading Course, I was absolutely thrilled with what I read. If I could have designed a college level course of study for the moms in this group, this is what it would look like. This is a study for the heart—with an emphasis at looking at the languages of art, music, poetry and literature of the ages with just enough history to put it in context. And I especially love that when you study the Ancient Egyptians or Babylonians or Greeks or Medieval times, you get a glimpse into their homes and their family lives; their systems of education and learning, things that are relevant to us in our everyday lives.

Although you may be able to find a set of used books through ebay or Amazon, we have posted all of them in the library. You’ll find all ten volumes in the World History Overview section. We have also brought them back into print so that you can use a hard copy to underline and take notes. They’re available in our store.

I also tracked down the nearly impossible to find study guides that went with them and compiled them into a study guide with questions that can help to direct your thoughts. I usually don't like study guides like that, but I find that this one is very helpful to pick up on concepts or ideas I may have missed in just reading through the text.

Although you can start in Volume I and read straight through, it's really not necessary. And so I broke down all the topics and placed them into the Rotation schedule. You will find Delphian reading in the High School sections as well as in the Mother's University topics. They are in the yellow blocks. I was also excited to find that many of the books they recommended to read for further study are available on Internet Archive and so I linked those books as well.

If you do it with the Rotation schedule, you will be learning the same things as your kids but at a different level. You may even have high schoolers who are interested in going through the Delphian Course.

Margaret Eggleston, my first storytelling friend, tells moms how to develop a rich personality:

“By loving the beautiful, by reading the worthwhile, by filling the mind with those things that are worth passing on, by cultivation of a cheery disposition, by striving toward high ideals.”

All these things are accomplished with the Delphian Reading Course. It may not be the study you begin with, but I just wanted to share with you what it is for when you are ready.