

Parenting For Christ

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*"As for me and my house,
we will serve the LORD!"*

Joshua 24:15

Thank you, Lord, for this challenge from Joshua! This should be the heartcry of all our families. Many of us probably have it on a wall, or picture frame ... but do we mean it? How do we put it into practice?

This is where a small illustration of marbles comes in handy, and that's why you can see jars of marbles in the children's wing here at Grace.



Marbles? Yes, marbles. Picture a big clear glass jar filled with marbles. Each marble represents one week in your child's life between birth and when they turn 18. That would be 936 marbles of all colors and designs, representing 936 wonderful weeks. Each time a week is over, one marble is removed from the jar. When our children are first born, we have such great visions of what wonderful parents we're going to be ... reading the Bible, prayer time, family devotions, church and AWANA. We are going to be the BEST parents ever! Then life starts happening. We take our eyes off our main goal – to rear children who LOVE the Lord and want to serve Him! The enemy slowly starts attacking areas of our lives that seem small or unimportant. As the years go by, our glass jar of marbles is dwindling. We look back and realize that we haven't done all the things we wanted to do with our children for Christ. Oh, we've made it to hours and hours of practices and competitions for dance, soccer, basketball, football, cheerleading, gymnastics, baseball, 4H, school concerts and countless other activities that are "good for our kids". We've spent hours bonding with our kids – movies, games and outings. But when we look back ... how much time have we spent teaching them God's Word, spending time in prayer ... growing together in Christ?

*"You shall teach them diligently to your children,
and shall talk of them when you sit in your house,
and when you walk by the way,
and when you lie down,
and when you rise."*

Deuteronomy 6:7 (ESV)

We seem to have time to do everything else for our kids that will make them better, stronger, wiser; but what is the most important thing?

Let's look at the marbles again. How many hours in a year do we have with our kids? Picture this marble container... it's HUGE! We have 8,760 hours per year with our kids. Do the math on your own ... how many of those hours did you teach/read/speak to your children about Christ and His faithfulness? I know what some will say ... maybe even you ... "I take them to church, and AWANA. Isn't that enough?" Is it?



Let's look at a smaller jar of marbles ... it represents one marble for each hour of the week. There would be 168 marbles in that jar. If you take out the marbles that they are at church and AWANA ... you are down 3 marbles. That leaves 165 marbles that they are with you, at school, with their friends, watching tv, listening to music, or other activities. Is 3 hours of learning about Christ from someone else enough in today's world? Is 3 hours out of 168 enough for equipping them to stand up for Christ, to help them grow in Christ and be ready to defeat the enemy's attacks? How about you as a parent? What would your marble jar look like if you compared the time you spend growing in Christ with the other activities in your life?

Our families are being attacked by the enemy, through many means; now worse than ever. Do we want to wait until our families are falling apart, or our kids are "lukewarm Christians", or, even worse, are prodigals, before we realize that we need Christ in the middle of our families in a more consistent manner? We need to remember the marbles ... that they are dwindling with each passing year. We need to make each hour, day, and week count for Christ. It's not too late ... your child might be 5, 9, 15, 17 or even 22 ... take the time together to grow in Christ. Open His Word; pray together ... be diligent in seeking HIM!

None of us are perfect parents, and having regrets comes with the territory. Being a faithful Christian parent is hard work! The Lord knows we will fail unless He helps us. And He will help us. We need not be afraid to admit to our children that, at times, we have wasted many marbles. Being willing to confess this to our children actually reinforces the importance of growing in Christ and it reaffirms our love for them.

When we say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD," let's make sure we mean it ... and do it! Don't let another day or week go by without making the Lord priority of your families!