



infants

TREASURE

In the middle of his most famous sermon, Jesus gives us some important instructions about treasure (Matthew 6:19-20). He warns us not to lay up our treasures on earth ("where moths corrupt and thieves break in and steal ..."), but instead to store our treasures in heaven (where neither of those things happen). Another way of paraphrasing Jesus' instruction is that we shouldn't invest our lives in stuff, which won't last very long. Rather, we should invest our lives in things that don't have an expiration date, things that will last for eternity.

As new parents, though, it is very easy to invest in stuff. Look at your home, which just a few months ago was likely neat and tidy, and in the blink of an eye it becomes overrun with baby equipment and toys. One of the reasons we are so apt to invest in stuff is because it produces an immediate reaction of joy for and from our kids. It is so easy to buy stuffed animals from favorite movies and shows or to want all the latest learning games and devices. But that stuff all has a shelf life. Just swing by the nearest garage sale sometime, and you'll see tons of toys, games and baby equipment for sale. Not that any of those things are bad - they're not. (Many of them do bring great joy in the moment, which is a good thing.) But it's also true that they last only for a season in a child's life.

The reminder, taken from Jesus' instructions, is that we should make an investment of time and energy in those things that our kids won't outgrow - things that last beyond a season of their life - and indeed prepare them to navigate future phases of life. Author Reggie Joiner remarks: "What I leave for my child is not nearly as important as what I leave in them."

The thing about treasure is this - rarely does someone stumble across a hidden treasure map, win the lottery or hit the jackpot. Treasure is rarely found; rather, it is built and saved through small, steady investments that add up over time. So our hope is that you'll start now making those small investments that will create a future treasure for your child. For as Jesus reminds us, "Where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also."

Start making those small investments that will create a future treasure for your child.

HOME ACTIVITY FOR TREASURE

letter writing

In his book *Let Your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer writes:

In those early days of my granddaughter's life, I began observing the inclinations and proclivities that were planted in her at birth. I noticed, and I still notice, what she likes and dislikes, what she is drawn toward and repelled by, how she moves, what she does, what she says.

I'm gathering observations in a letter. When my granddaughter reaches her late teens or 20s, I will make sure that my letter finds its way to her, with a preface something like this: 'Here is a sketch of who you were from your earliest days in this world. It is not a definitive picture - only you can draw that. But it was sketched by a person who loves you very much. Perhaps these notes will help you do something your grandfather did only much later: remember who you were when you first arrived and reclaim the true gift of self.'

Can you feel the power such a letter might have? How precious that letter would become to her in the coming years? Or perhaps a better question might be: why don't all parents and grandparents prepare letters like this? What keeps us from making that investment in our kids?

There might be many reasons: not having the time or not feeling gifted at choosing the right words. But the reality is any one of us can leave this treasure for our children, if we just start the habit early.

HERE ARE A COUPLE OF IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED:

1. Capture favorite memories

These might be special vacations or moments together, or they might be a ritual or phrase that gets repeated in your home often. Write down your child's firsts (words, steps, etc.). Trust us, you'll forget them if they're not written down!

2. Paint a portrait

Notice your child's personality and habits from an early age. Gather clues to detect who they will become someday. Focus on the miracle and not the mess. Celebrate what is unique and special about your child!

3. Make it a tradition

Letters gain power when done consistently. Set a regular interval for when you will write your child (for instance, every birthday or Christmas).

4. Add pictures

Your kids won't understand the full meaning of your words until they are older, but they'll love looking at pictures of themselves from day one. Even if you're not a scrapbooker, just a few pictures sprinkled in will keep them hooked and looking forward to the next letter!