

I do not know the author of this article that I received via Twitter. This says so much of where we are at today spiritually in America. Excellent article.

Sports vs. Church

WARNING: The following may make you uncomfortable...may even make you mad!

Last Sunday morning I found myself sitting on a soccer field with one of my children for a tournament game. It was a beautiful morning. The sun was shining. I was enjoying some fabulous coffee.

I was also experiencing great frustration and conflict. I was frustrated because I could count 20 families from our church who were also at sports games that morning. This meant that these families were not at church.

I was also conflicted as I reflected on how I got into this situation. My husband and I know the value of church family. We know that consistency is very important for our children to build relationships with their church family and to grow as disciples of Christ. We have made many decisions over the years to say “no” to other things in order to say “yes” to church. And, yet, here I was on a soccer field on a Sunday morning! A couple weeks earlier the coach gathered the parents around and presented this opportunity for the soccer tournament that would land on a Saturday and Sunday. The way it was put to us, I felt like I had no choice but to participate. The team wouldn’t be able to play in the tournament unless everyone chose to play. If we said no, we would be letting down 12 other kids.

So, here I was sitting on the sidelines of a soccer game contemplating the predicament of so many families. Many families I’ve talked to about this feel like they have no choice for a variety of reasons. Maybe it’s a sport that our kids love, maybe there are opportunities that would be missed if we pulled our kids, maybe we feel an obligation to a team, maybe there’s real potential in our little athletes that may never be recognized. There are many reasons that we come to the decisions that keep our families away from church. I completely understand how we get there – but I also know the long term effect that missing church will take on our families. And that’s the predicament that has been tormenting me.

Now, I’m not saying that one missed Sunday is going to derail your children’s spiritual growth. But I have noticed that our society is set up to undermine this discipline of regular fellowship with our church family. So unless we are very vigilant to protect our church commitment, we can quickly find that one Sunday missed has become many Sundays missed, and before long church has ceased to be a habit and is reduced to something we do when we don’t have anything else to do on Sunday mornings.

When we say “yes” to one thing, we are saying “no” to something else. I have seen it too easily happen that without meaning to reject church, families are saying “yes” to extracurricular activities – but this “yes” is also a “no” to consistency at church activities and developing relationships with our church family. I have spoken to so many parents who spend years on the field, at the pool, on the ski slopes, in the gym, or in the studio and when they get to the other side of these years have deep regrets. Their children don’t want to go to church, they don’t have relationships with peers or leaders who know

and love Jesus, and they have not developed the discipline of making church a priority. These parents who now have grown children have expressed that they would do it different if they could go back and do it again. I have had several parents with grown children express that it was not worth it. They did not carefully guard their priorities and allowed other commitments to push out what was most important. They can look back and see that the time spent on other activities directly affected their children's relationship with church and this directly affected their relationship with God.

Church attendance is not the goal...however, church is the way that God has provided for people to grow in their knowledge and love of who God is and build relationships with other disciples and from this time of focusing on Jesus and connecting with others who love Jesus we can go out into the world and spread the good news of Jesus Christ and his love with others.

I'm back to my predicament....I know that church is important....I also feel like I don't have a choice sometimes. Can we learn from the parents that have gone before us? Can we step back a bit and think about the adults that we are raising? What if our children get to their early 20's and have no relationship with God or other disciples of Jesus? Will we look back and say, "Well, at least they made it to the championships!"? Or will we look back with regrets and disappointment that our priorities were not reflected on our calendar?

Like I said earlier, this particular weekend I could count 20 families in the same position that I found myself in. Most were also frustrated and feeling helpless. Most of my friends find themselves making this no-win choice at some point in the year depending on the season. Many families are even sacrificing rest and are so busy and going so hard that they are making themselves physically sick.

Could there be a better way? What if we ALL joined together and said, "NO! No more sports on Sundays!"? When we were kids, there was never anything scheduled on Sundays. We never had to choose between sports and church. Sundays were saved for church and family and gathering with friends. Can we reclaim our Sundays if we all worked together?

I propose that we give it a try! I also will say that even if our society won't cooperate, for me and my family I will do what I can to maintain consistency for my children to be at church and build relationships with other kids and youth who know and love Jesus! I will not tell you what is best for your family...I will encourage you to take some time out to prayerfully consider this, talk it over with your spouse, and make sure your priorities determine your calendar and not the other way around.