

Parenthood (22): Recreation

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My most cherished childhood memories center not upon the things I *had* but the things I *did* in spite of what I didn't have. Palmetto fronds were honed into swords; grapefruit trees were airplanes; an ordinary bath towel pinned around my neck magically became Superman's cape. A board propped on a cement block transformed me into Evel Knievel. Hide-and-seek was a big adrenaline rush.

I loved sports and later played city-league baseball and football. I also enjoyed a rotation of tennis, golf, bowling, water skiing, basketball, ping pong, billiards, fishing and swimming throughout the year.

There was no such thing as home computers or electronic games such as Sega or Nintendo. In fact, I remember when everyone was filled with wide-eyed wonder at the first black and white "Pong" which could be played on the TV.

Childhood involves a lot of "down-time" that is important to mental, emotional and social development. Role playing serves as "practice" for real life and stimulates the imagination. Sports teaches many valuable lessons applicable to everyday life. Developing one's artistic skills enhances self-discipline, creativity and an appreciation of beauty. But in a variation of Mrs. Gump's maxim, *"Recreation is like a box of chocolates; too much of it can make you sick."*

I have noticed over the past few years an imbalance in recreation on the part of many Christians. They fill their children's schedules so full of outside activity that there is little time left for family meals, Bible studies, association with other Christians, attending gospel meetings or other important activities. I've heard more than one parent lament their child's addiction to Sega but yet lack the gumption to take it away.

One source of overemphasis is the amount of money now associated with recreational activities. Lucrative scholarships and professional salaries await those who perfect their skills. Another source is the subtle belief on the part of some parents that "busy" equals "happy." We've gone overboard when our children learn to value their teammates, statistics and press clippings more than the Lord's approval.

Children do not need constant entertainment or artificial stimulation. They need time to think, to imagine, to pretend – to be carefree and unburdened. Soon enough the pressures of adulthood will make them long for the days when happiness was a stick, a tree or a towel.