



from the desk of

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It's a battle....

Light vs. Darkness

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. **Ephesians 6:12 (NIV)**

In case you've been missing it, what I've been portraying the past few weeks is essentially a battle for the hearts and minds of the believer. Consider the following illustration:

Once upon a time an Indian had two dogs – a black one and a white one. They were both the same size and weight. The Indian loved them both, but the two dogs did not love each other. They would often fight each other so brutally that the other Indians knew that eventually one dog would kill the other. They had a running bet as to which dog would win the final fight. One day, the owner of the dogs showed up around the campfire and explained that one of his dogs had killed the other. His friends asked which dog won the fight. The Indian replied, "The one I fed the most."

What are you feeding your children? What are you feeding yourself? Does most of your time - or their time for that matter - involve either media or mindlessness? Do you plan your evenings around social media or other media?

Sometimes what we "feed" on isn't otherwise bad. Having children involved in sports or other teams really isn't a bad thing. Eating pizza isn't necessarily bad for you either. But if most of your time - your children's time - centers around athletics, I argue that would be like eating *little else* than pizza. After a while you're not getting what's truly beneficial in your diet. In time the athletics or other activities can crowd much of everything else out, including spiritual growth.

An article in the Dallas Morning News¹ listed one family's experience this way:

"We'd lie in bed and try to figure out the next day," Livingstone said. "He's got a practice in Frisco, and he has something at 6:30. We'd try to figure out how to get through the next day."

At the final tournament of the season, with the finish line in sight, the couple counted up how many games their sons had played – and they had attended – since the seasons started in the spring. The total: 167, five games more than a major-league team's calendar.

Toward the end of the article they further stated:

In the end, he's (the dad) more interested in his sons learning lessons of hard work and persistence through failure, both hard-won in athletics. (this is after recognizing that they won't be college scholarship level talents).

And so, the calendar fills up, and Livingstone's family rolls on. By Jennifer's estimates, over the past year, games or tournaments have occupied 45 out of the past 52 weekends.

Downtime is rare. They found a week and a half at the end of the summer to squeeze in a family vacation and just got back. Junior high football camp started Thursday.

I would contend that this is a whole lot of pizza (both literally and figuratively!). They examined their lives and (as far as I'm concerned) decided to keep things unbalanced. In the end the choice is yours. With the schedule the Livingstone family has adopted, I don't see where Sunday School, Bible Class and church would even fit in.

However, parents, even with a busy schedule, there are options you can have for your children to have an intake that is beneficial for their faith (in addition to carving out weekend worship & study time).

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund has a site that while aimed at teaching children to become investors, also has daily devotions and other games. It has three different age groups from birth to 18 years of age. The link is: <http://yiclub.lcef.org/>

While not a site aimed at kids, Focus on the Family has many resources for parents. (a <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting>). On their site you can enter a search for "children" and come up with helps on a variety of topics (including how to talk to your children on transgender issues). They also have subscriptions for children's magazines (Clubhouse Jr. for 3-7, Clubhouse for 8-12 and Brio for teen girls. Go to <https://store.focusonthefamily.com/focus-featured/magazine-subscriptions> to check out these resources.

A favorite periodical of mine is World Magazine, a twice monthly news magazine coming from a conservative Christian focus. World also has children and teen offerings - God's Big World (<http://godsbigworld.wng.org/>), World Kids (<https://kids.wng.org/>) and World Teen (<http://teen.wng.org/>) World Teen is a subscription to an online site - and is totally safe!

As time goes on I'll pass along additional resources. I'm also going to get copies of some of the above resources and set up a display when they arrive.

Need further ideas with specific needs? I'm only an email away!
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¹ <http://res.dallasnews.com/interactives/club-sports/part1/>