

JAM'S PLAYGROUND

THE EMAIL FILE

A Thousand Marbles (edited to fit a church bulletin insert)

The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings. Perhaps it's the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise, or maybe it's the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. A few weeks ago, I sat in the backyard patio listening to a radio talk show. What began as a typical Saturday morning, turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time to time. The host, a retired senior citizen who did the morning show as a hobby, was talking with a high powered corporate executive.

"Tom, it sure sounds like you're busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well, but it's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter's dance recital. Let me tell you something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities." And that's when he spoke of his thousand marbles.

"I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy-five years. Some live more and some less, but on average, folks live about seventy-five years. So, I multiplied 75 times 52 and came up with 3900, which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime. I was fifty-five years old at the time, and by that time I had lived through over twenty-eight hundred Saturdays. I figured that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy.

So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I had to visit three toy stores to round up 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside of a large, clear plastic container. Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away. I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight.

"Now, Tom, let me tell you one last thing before I sign-off the show and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container. I figure if I make it until next Saturday then I have been given a little extra time. And the one thing we can all use is a little more time. It was nice to meet you Tom, I hope you spend more time with your family, and I hope to meet you again."

You could have heard a pin drop on the radio when this fellow signed off. I guess he gave us all a lot to think about. I had planned to go in to work that morning. Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. "C'mon honey, I'm taking you and the kids to breakfast."

"What brought this on?" she asked with a smile.

"Oh, nothing special, it's just been a while since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. Hey, can we stop at a toy store while we're out? I need to buy some marbles."