

A Stone In A Desert of Sand

Steve Alley

Jesus said that the person who builds his life on the Word of God is like a person who builds his house on the rock. He also said that a person who doesn't build his life on the Word of God is like a person builds his house on the sand. Today's children are trying to live in a desert of sand!

Much like camping in the desert, the "sand" of today's world blows into the children's lives, and "gets into everything"! It is not possible to prevent a child or youth from being exposed to the bothersome "sand" of the society all around them. Paul describes this "sand" very clearly in 2 Timothy 3:1-4:

"...people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God."



Here is a list of things that today's "sand" includes:

- Hatred or devaluing based on race or ethnicity.
- Political anger and caustic language about those who don't believe the same things. Angry and belittling comments are "normal," instead of humbly uplifting others.
- The LGBTQ influence – God's standards for relationships and marriage are questioned and mocked.
- Definitions of "right" and "wrong" are not based on biblical standards, but on popular opinions instead.
- Marriage standards and commitment are weakening. The perspective of "If it doesn't work, throw it away" is pervasive and almost "normal."
- Personal looks, attire, or possessions are standards for determining "value" or "identity," instead of focusing on biblical character qualities.
- Foundational actions, like prayer, the pledge of allegiance, and the national anthem are all being questioned or removed.
- The division of the country around race equality and respect.
- The declining "popularity" of going to church.
- Biblical literacy is at an all-time low among families.
- The "social media / electronic age" is producing children and youth who aren't able to communicate verbally, nor want to.
- The "social media / electronic age" is producing a growing percentage of children and youth who are isolated and disconnected from others their own age.
- A growing disrespect for authority.
- A growing sense of self-sufficiency, and a lack of need for others' help.

Parents are frightened! They are frightened by the pressures and influences their children face. They aren't sure how to counteract the "sand" that blows so strongly upon their children! They may understand the responsibilities placed on them by God in Deuteronomy 6: 4-9; but they need help in carrying out those responsibilities!



The help today's parents need will probably not come from their children's schoolteachers, unless they can afford to enroll their children in private, Christian schools. The help they need could come from other Christian parents who share in their struggle. The help parents need today can definitely come from YOU! As a part of the children's ministry (CM) at your church, you can be a "stone" in a desert of sand for both the parents, and for the children! For some children, who don't have parents who have built their own lives, or their home on the "rock" of Jesus' teaching, you may be the only "stone" they know!



Your goal, as a "stone" in the desert, is to "attract and direct." God has placed you in the children's lives to "attract" them to you, then to "direct" them to Jesus!

Have you ever struggled to pull a wheeled cooler through the sand at the beach? The sand fights against the wheels, and drags the cooler down as your feet also sink into the sand. With every step, you look forward to the cement walkway ahead! When you reach the walkway, your spirit does a little "happy dance" as your wheels zoom across the cement! The lives that the children experience may be much like dragging that cooler across the sand! They experience confusion and exhaustion as they try to navigate through the "sand" of messages thrown at them through television, news, movies, and social media. When they see you at church their spirit should do that same "happy dance" because they feel safe, affirmed, and protected by you!



Jesus calls you "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world"! He challenges you to "...let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven." (Matthew 5: 13-16) This challenge is a great description of our goal to "attract and direct"! Here are some ideas for becoming more "attractive" as a "stone in the desert" for children:

- **Attention** – Pay attention to them (eye contact, remember and use their name, listen to them and value their comments)
- **Connection** – Connect with them (use their terminology, don't be too "religious," reference their food/TV shows/music, understand and use their fears/feelings/dreams, see the scripture through their eyes, physically connect with them through "high 5's"/shoulder touches/fist bumps)
- **Direction** – Give simple direction (biblical standards, godly behavior, examples of Jesus, personal testimonies)
- **Compliment** – Give personal compliments (encouragement for attempts, celebrating victories, support the "heart" direction)
- **Correction** – When necessary, correct their behavior or choices in a supportive, positive way. Look for their adjustment, and celebrate it!
- **Play** – Laugh and play together! Don't be so serious that there is no fun! Celebrate being a kid!

Once the children are attracted to you, it is easy to direct them to Jesus! He is the true "rock" for the rest of their lives! Your hope, prayer and goal is for the children to stand firm on God's "rock" as David expressed in Psalm 31: 1-3:

"In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge; Let me never be ashamed; In Your righteousness deliver me. Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly; Be to me a rock of strength, A stronghold to save me. For You are my rock and my fortress; For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me."

Ask God to inspire you to be a "stone" in the children's lives! Be passionate about "translating" your curriculum into the children's lives, and directing them to a personal relationship with Jesus, the one true "rock" in a desert of sand!