

# CLASIS

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*Sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago*

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## Kids Being Kings

*by Ted A. Trainor*

“Happy hearts and happy faces,  
Happy play in grassy places—  
That was how in ancient ages,  
Children grew to kings and sages.”

~From “Good and Bad Kids” by Robert Louis Stevenson

One year ago, the centerpiece of our backyard makeover in Atlanta was a mound of Georgia red clay. To my children, however, the dirt pile was a world to conquer, a natural slide, an alpine adventure, a tower to climb, and a precipice from which to jump. From atop Knox’s Knoll (named after the littlest Trainor), they launched pinecones, rocks, dirt, sticks, and each other.

I was amazed as I watched my children dig, build, bury, and play with the clay for hours—for days even! With their imaginations ignited by dirt, my children had endless activities, and these activities were (and are!) critical to their physical development. Think of the gross motor skill exercise that occurs in the above activities. Underneath those red clay stained clothes, muscles were strengthening, their limbs and joints adjusted dexterously to accommodate the varying slopes of the descent, and their knees and quadriceps became accustomed to that strange buckling sensation of “going down” a hill.

While I worried at the thought of my risk-taking third child riding a bike down the steepest side of the hill, I rejoiced in watching him learn to shift his weight, balance, turn and bounce. Whereas I cringed as he flew over the handlebars and as his mouth inched ever closer to “eating dirt,” I exhaled a sigh of relief that he was strong enough to withstand a fall.

Our children, I believe, are not merely “kids being kids,” as the mantra goes. Something more profound is happening to children as they play. In fact, Christian parents ought to see these backyard adventures more as “kids being kings.” These everyday activities in the backyard are component parts of

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what it means to be human, let alone a microcosm of what it means to be image-bearers of God. God says, “Fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

The first man began fulfilling God’s commands (Gen. 1:28 is often called the “cultural mandate”) in a garden while modern man begins, in a sense, in the backyard. Children were made to traverse hills, collect bugs,

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## CLASSIS

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## Kids Being Kings

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extract worms from the mud, and catch fireflies. Outdoor play is simply the beginning of a child's maturation in fulfilling this cultural mandate. Stephen Perks illustrates this concept so adeptly in his work, *A Christian Philosophy of Education Explained*: "This process of education, of learning and growth in the understanding of God's creation and man's part in it, is essential to man's stewardship of the earth and to his calling to have dominion over it. It

is not something that stands on its own, an end in itself. It has a purpose. That purpose is to train man into his calling under God and is thus fulfilled only as he exercises that calling. Education is the means of preparing man for his God-given task

of subduing and replenishing the earth as God's image-bearer" (88).

Thus, let us purpose to nurture our children in such a manner that playing in the backyard becomes "kids" training for "kingship." We have a calling to assist them

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in maturing in such a way so as to serve nobly and righteously the King of Kings in all that we do—whether it be strengthening our bodies by taking dominion of a dirt pile

or by sharpening our minds and character through diligently completing our homework assignments. "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17). Amen.

*Ted and Kathryn Trainor, and their four children, have relocated from Atlanta to the rolling hills and turkey populated fields of middle Tennessee.*



*Ted is now the headmaster at Providence Christian Academy, a joyful school expecting over 230 students and a ninth grade in 2006-2007 in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.*

*He and Kathryn are currently contemplating the next backyard makeover. Anxiously awaiting the arrival of the next pile of dirt, their four children are sharpening their kickball skills for now, and three of the four attend Providence Christian Academy.*