



*Gwen shopping for*

## OH MY BABY!

Twelve years ago, we were made aware of a striking need in our community. In a casual conversation with the social worker on the mother/baby floor of Lakeland's huge regional hospital, Gwen discovered that at least two newborn babies are discharged each week to homes that have nothing available for their care: no diapers; no baby bottles; no blankets; no beds; no clothing at all!

Gwen decided it was time to do something to meet this need. With the help of Brenda Tice, the social worker from the hospital (and a couple of the Detroit Tiger's wives whose husbands were in Lakeland for rehab assignments), she made a list of items that are essential for the first two weeks of baby care. Together they began to raise money and collect the necessary items.

They decided to name their endeavor **OH MY BABY!** In the early days, along with a bag filled with care items, each mom received a playard for her baby to sleep in and a car seat if she didn't already have one available. Liability issues soon prohibited the hospital from dispensing car seats, so a program was set up through the police department, which now offers the seats (along with information on how to install them correctly) in exchange for a minimal fee. Not long after that, a county agency realized the value and practicality of the playards and applied for a grant. They now provide baby beds to families in need.

This allows Gwen to focus on making baby bags for the new moms to take home from the hospital. The list of items included has morphed slightly over the years, but at this time each bag contains:

- 1 package Newborn Diapers (~40)
- 2 receiving Blankets
- 1 swaddler
- 3 newborn Onesies (short sleeves for summer; long sleeves for winter)
- 3 pairs of newborn pants
- 3 pairs newborn Socks
- 3 newborn 4 oz Bottles (Solid Plastic)
- 1 hooded Towel
- 1 package Washcloths
- 1 large bottle Baby Hair and Body Wash
- 1 large tube Baby Ointment
- 1 large plastic container Baby Wipes
- 2 - 3 newborn Pacifiers
- 1 digital Thermometer
- 1 baby (or toddler) Bible
- 1 large Bag (to hold the supplies and serve as a diaper bag)

All the items must be brand new, and the total cost of each bag is ~\$150.00. Over the past twelve years we have been blessed to deliver well over 1,000 bags!

The recipients selected by the social workers remain anonymous due to HIPAA laws. But they are always thrilled with their "baby shower in a bag." A note is attached to each one expressing that we are praying for them, and encouraging them to contact us via our Face book page (Oh My Baby Lakeland) if they need further help. A few of them have sent us messages, allowing us to help more personally and specifically. (e.g. With the help of Badcock Home Furniture, we were able to provide bunk beds for some older children who were sleeping on the floor.)

We have been very fortunate over the years to receive help from many generous donors and companies in Lakeland. We are especially grateful to The GiveWell Community Foundation. We are also indebted to the many local agencies and groups who have designated **OH MY BABY!** as one of their charity projects. These include: FedEx and Auto Owner's Insurance agencies; several MOPS groups and Bible studies; a number of local play groups; and many individuals and families (like Sandra Contreras and the Gunters) who contribute on a regular basis.

But the need is increasing and we could definitely use your help as well. Since **OH MY BABY!** is a non-profit ministry being administered under the auspices of 71:17 Ministries, any monetary gifts made out to 71:17 Ministries and designated for OH MY Baby are tax-deductible. You can also donate on our website: [71-17.org](http://71-17.org).

Our goal is to share Christ's love in a tangible way and to introduce each family we serve to the wonderful truths in God's Word.



## **FIVE PARENTING PRINCIPLES** **From Psalm 127**

*By Ed and Gwen Diaz*

When we first became parents, we wanted to find a family in the Bible that we could use as a model for our home. Unfortunately, the more we looked, the more frustrated we became!

What about the family of Abraham? With his overwhelming desire to start a family, Abraham fathered a child with Hagar – the maidservant of his wife. The strife that relationship caused has lasted more than 4000 years.

What about a New Testament family? How about Mary and Joseph? We do know that they had a large family. But at a crucial time, Joseph probably died and left behind a widow and 7 orphans – not the easiest or best foundation on which to build.

Even though we never found a biblical family to use as a pattern for our parenting, we have been able to uncover several key principles in the Scriptures. As a matter of fact, five of them come from Psalm 127:

<sup>1</sup>*A Song of Ascents, of Solomon.*  
*Unless the Lord builds the house,*  
*They labor in vain who build it;*  
*Unless the Lord guards the city,*  
*The watchman keeps awake in vain.*

<sup>2</sup>*It is vain for you to rise up early,*  
*To retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors;*  
*For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.*

<sup>3</sup>*Behold, children are a gift of the Lord;*  
*The fruit of the womb is a reward.*

<sup>4</sup>*Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,*  
*So are the children of one's youth.*

<sup>5</sup>*How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them;*  
*They shall not be ashamed,*

When they speak with their enemies in the gate. The writer of this psalm is King Solomon – the wisest king to ever rule in Israel! He begins by making several observations about life in general before he focuses on parenting. He describes three things that are done “in vain” apart from God’s direct involvement: building a house, guarding a city, and long hours of labor. This word “vain” is the same word that becomes a major theme in

Solomon’s book of Ecclesiastes. It is best illustrated by a soap bubble that shimmers beautifully in the light then suddenly vanishes with no trace.

One of the ways that God removes the “vanity” from an empty life is by providing **children**. But even raising them can be “in vain” if they are not raised according to God’s principles.

In Psalm 127:3 Solomon says, “*children are a gift.*” The Hebrew word for gift comes from a real estate term meaning “an assignment of property.” Each child is a special assignment from God and comes with his/her own unique lessons attached!

Also in verse 3, children are called a “*reward*”. In our culture, children are often treated as a burden rather than a blessing. How refreshing to hear God’s perspective on our children and our grandchildren!

Then God provides us with a wonderful analogy – one that changed our parenting forever. He describes a parent as a **warrior**! When you think about it, there are at least five things that a warrior must do to be triumphant. These same principles apply to raising successful children who will make an impact in their culture. We will elaborate on each of these five principles over the next months, but for now here is a short summary:

1. We must **place our arrows in a bow**. Just as the warrior has to entrust his arrow to a “source of power outside of himself,” we must entrust our children to the greatest power source of all – God our heavenly Father.

2. We must **draw the arrow back to ourselves**. We live our lives at a hectic pace, and the prevailing theory of parenting is that “quality time is more important than quantities of time.” Unfortunately, most people fail to realize that most quality time is a product of quantities of time spent with each child.

3. We must **aim our arrows at an appropriate target**. Most parents take very little time setting goals for their children. Often, the goals that we do set are related to **achievement** rather than **character**. We get caught up with test scores, athletic achievements, and popularity as opposed to setting goals that build characteristics God is interested in like contentment, servanthood, and honesty.

4. The warrior parent must **practice**. We believe that it is necessary to find ways to “**let our children go**” before they leave home for good. We must allow for failure and make the necessary adjustments for our children to mature as godly young men and women.

5. We must **expect our arrows to make a difference!** One of the most effective ways to convey our expectations is to provide tangible symbols and traditions that our children can take with them into their world as they endeavor to live for Christ.

Tune in next month as we study more deeply the first in our Five Parenting Principles From Psalm 127!