



## MISSING FROM THE MANUAL

Our neighbors have four little children who remind me so much of our own. They are just about the same distance apart in age; they love playing outdoors with sticks and balls and shovels and ropes; they hate to wear shoes; and they love going fast on whatever riding toy is available. They have unbridled energy.

The one big difference I have noticed between their family and ours is the fact that we only had boys. Their youngest is a girl, which seems to complicate things quite a bit. [Jonny did I ever tell you how grateful I am that you are a male!?] A three-bedroom house doesn't work nearly as well for them as it did for us. Bath times can't possibly be one big splash party in the shower. And clothes are not quite as interchangeable.

Well, the other day I got a text from my neighbor asking me to come over and check out a strange "wound" on her four-year-old son's leg. Knowing that I had a degree in nursing and had raised four sons (the first, by the way, in no way prepares you for the second), she wanted my input about the strange burn or scrape that had suddenly appeared for no reason.

Joseph had gone to bed the night before in pristine condition (excluding the normal four-year-old, barefoot boy's bumps and bruises), and had woken up with a large, gray and red injury slanting across much of his right thigh. There was nothing in or around his bed that could have caused it. It certainly wasn't a bug bite of any kind. And it didn't react to hydrogen peroxide like a normal scrape should.

There seemed to be no explanation . . .

. . . until she decided to wash his bed sheets. Prone to an occasional nightly mishap, she had checked, and JoJo's sheets were damp, which meant – so were his pj's. She dug them out of the hamper, but before

she threw them in the washing machine, she noticed that something was in the pocket. It was a battery – exactly the shape and size as his wound.

Sure enough, when you Google the words "battery" and "urine" there are almost 600,000 hits, and most of them have to do with a new urine-powered battery that is being developed and may one day provide lights and hot water in third-world countries. (I'm not making that up.) They explain that small amounts of acid and urine can produce a lot of heat energy. But none of them warn you to check your kids' pajama pockets for batteries before they go to bed!

This is just one of the many warnings that needs to be added to the Parenting Manual that we all wish we had received on the day we gave birth.

Oh – and here's another:

For you brave parents who have finally made it through the teething and tiredness and terrible two's, did anyone bother to mention that you will have to go through them all again – in about ten years?

- Teething will repeat itself in the form of spacers and braces and teeth that are knocked out by foul balls. (Yep, there can be lots of pain and whining and trips to the doctor – now in the form of a dentist.)
- This time the tiredness will come as a result of emotional exhaustion rather than physical exhaustion. (Trust me, you'll long for the "good old days" when your head finally hit the pillow and you immediately started snoring.)
- And the tantrums that accompanied the terrible two's will return under the guise of puberty. However, this time your kids will have a much-enhanced vocabulary to accompany their outbursts.

Remember when you were able to make it all the way through level 3 and survive the wrath of Donkey Kong only to face a stronger, faster, fiercer foe in level 4? It seemed like he was on steroids. Well, that's precisely what happens – the steroids kick in!!

Oh – and did anyone else mention that you will have to be ready to switch characters in the real-life version of this game without a moment's notice? One second you'll be the hero, then voilà, you're the villain. It gets very confusing – and some days you will just plain blow it. You will suddenly morph into "that parent in the grocery store" without being given much of a choice.

I'm not sure if I should mention all this to my neighbor just yet. It might be a little depressing. Maybe I should give her some time to confiscate all the batteries from her children's toys before I share all the other things she has to look forward to.



## WARRIOR PARENTING PRINCIPLE #1

### Part 2 in a series from Psalm 127 By Ed and Gwen Diaz

In Psalm 127:4, Solomon tells us: *Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth.*

What on earth does this mean? Is he just using a creative allegory or is he actually conveying something important about how God wants us to raise our children?

I was puzzling over this verse one morning after the kids left for school. I re-read it many times, but every time I did, it seemed to raise more questions than it answered. So I closed my Bible and began cleaning up the family room.

As I was picking up scattered toys and throwing them in a big basket, I spied a little wooden arrow with a red rubber tip lodged under the couch. I retrieved it, stared at it for a while, and sighed, "Ok, God, would You please explain to me how our kids are like this arrow? What is it You are trying to tell us about raising our kids?"

Suddenly it dawned on me that the arrow I was holding was completely useless – unless I had a bow to launch it with. Even if it had a sharp metal tip instead of a red rubber one, it could never make much of an impact with my efforts alone. There had to be an external source of power – something much stronger to get it where it needed to go.

That's when I realized, "The first thing God wants us to do is give our children to Him; we must place them in His power instead of trying to raise them on our own. That's what this verse means!"

Together Ed and I discovered that amazing things can happen when we entrust our children to God. In Ephesians 1:18-20, we found that the very same awesome power which raised Jesus from the dead is available in our lives!

Paul writes, *"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,*

*and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms."*

But how can we access this power? How can we make God's power a part of our experience as we raised our children?

The answer we found is – through prayer! The Bible explains that prayer is the key to unleashing the power of God in our children's lives. When we call on Him, He hears us and He answers. He gives us the strength to face whatever we encounter. In Psalm 138:3 David says, *"On the day I called, You answered me: You made me bold with strength in my soul."*

We found that prayer works in much the same way that electricity does. The first thing we do when we walk into a dark room is flip the switch on the wall. Right? Even though the electrical wires have already been run; the bulbs have all been screwed into their sockets; and the current is readily available, the room remains dark until the switch is turned on and a connection is made.

Prayer is the switch that turns on the power of God. He is anxious to meet our needs and to help us with the decisions involved in raising our kids, but He doesn't impose His will on us. He designed prayer to be our option – our way of letting Him know that we desire His help; that we want to connect with His power.

If we want our kids to make a difference in this world, we need to pray diligently for them. We need to constantly ask for His wisdom and power in parenting them. Jeremiah 32:17 promises us that nothing is too difficult for God. He is willing and able to help us in every circumstance.

But we must not only pray *for* our children. We must pray *with* them. They need to learn from us how to access God's amazing power.

Some of the most treasured times we had in raising our sons came as we prayed with them at their bedsides. We made it a habit to do try to do this every night with each of our sons. And we didn't just recite routine prayers. We thanked God together for what He had provided for them that day, and we prayed for specific needs that they had in their lives.

To summarize: God doesn't just want us to raise "good" kids. He wants us to raise children who will impact the world they live in. In order to be the warrior parents God talks about in Psalm 127, we must be willing to place our arrows in a Bow – a Source of Power outside of ourselves. But we can only access this power through prayer.

[Tune in next month as we look at the second of five Principles for Warrior Parenting we found in Psalm 127.]