

# The DIAZ Dispatch

May 2017



## AN ENDANGERED HABITAT

Barbara lives just down the street in a single story brick home. It sits about ten yards back off the street. There is nothing noteworthy about this older home that was constructed sometime during the 1940's – except for one thing. It has a *front porch* with three big rockers.

It is the only house for blocks around that has a functional front porch. All the others, mostly newer residences, have their porches hidden around back. Ours is the newest house on the block, and it is no exception. And, although we have a wonderful pool back there, our “hangout place” doesn't allow us to interact with any of our neighbors.

At first I felt that this was a blessing, because it provided us with our own private and very peaceful sanctuary. But I have since decided that it's a shame.

You see, Barbara sits in one of the rockers on her porch for at least an hour every day. While she's there she gets to know everyone who walks by. And since we are only half a block from a big city park, this turns out to be a lot of people! She knows all the neighbors and waves at each of us when we drive by. She shouts greetings to the children as they traipse up and down the street. Even strangers enjoy her warm smile.

But the most important thing Barbara does on her front porch is pray for people. I found that out one day when I took the time to walk over and sit down in the rocker next to hers. Before I left, she asked me what I needed her to pray for. Ever since then, we have spent quite a bit of time rocking and praying together.

Several years ago an elderly neighbor, who lived across the street from us before she moved into

an assisted living arrangement, commented on the fact that she seldom got to talk me. She observed, “I'd like to get to know you, but I can't. You drive straight into your garage – that somehow opens all by itself – then you close it and you never reappear until it's time for you to go somewhere else. Then you do the same thing in reverse.”

She added, “But, do you know Barbara? She sits out there and waves to me and makes me feel loved.”

Ouch! After that I made a point of walking over to see Virginia whenever I could.

I couldn't help but feel that Barbara has a distinct advantage when it comes to neighborhood relationships since she has a front porch! But ever since Virginia's comment, I have tried to think of a way to change that. Somehow I needed to relocate my “hang out” space.

Well, last month it happened. Our driveway, which was cracking and settling, needed to be replaced. Ed and I realized that by using pavers and extending them around the garage to the front door, we could create a comfortable place to sit in the shade of our oak tree.

Pavers are much more expensive than concrete, but we both felt it would be worth it. We actually saved up for a year to be able to do this and, as a birthday present to each other, last month we hired a crew to install them.

Two days later, as the workers were loading up their equipment, twelve of our neighbors came over to check things out. We stood around talking and laughing and enjoying our new space for almost an hour! (We have since bought chairs.)

In our quest for privacy, society has taken what was once the hub and heart of neighborhood friendliness and hidden it at the back of our homes thus hindering our ability to get to know each other. Because of this, front porches have become an endangered habitat. But I believe that we need to save them! They serve an extremely valuable purpose – especially when it comes to friendship evangelism.

Our new space is not exactly a front porch, but it is changing the way we interact with our neighbors. And as we sit out there, we get to spend time praying that our new pavers will produce eternal relationships.



## WARRIOR PARENTING PRINCIPLE #2

### We must Draw our Arrows Back to Ourselves

Part 3 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.*** Last month we shared that this verse became the basis for much of our parenting as Ed and I raised four sons. When we considered this simile and contemplated the actions of a young warrior, we discovered five principles that became our guidelines.

***Principle #1: We must place our arrows in a Bow – a Source of Power outside of ourselves.*** God is the source of all the wisdom and power we could ever need for parenting. We must access that power if we want our children's lives to make an impact. We accomplish this through prayer. [We discussed this in depth in last month's newsletter available at our website: [71:17.org](http://71:17.org)]

But what does a young warrior do after he has placed his arrow in the bow? He grasps that arrow while it is still in the bow, and he pulls it back to himself. This close contact is vital for accuracy.

Raising children who will not only succeed, but will make an impact on the world they live in, requires spending a lot of time with them!

In Deuteronomy 6:6-9 Moses writes:

*"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."*

Moses insists that we make God our ultimate priority and that we diligently bring our children up to love Him and know His Word. In order to accomplish this:

- He assumes that we will spend quite a bit of time teaching and training our own children – instead of leaving their understanding of Him up to others.

- He expects that when we are at home we will make an effort to be in the same room with our children – willing to carry on meaningful conversations instead of each becoming engrossed in our own social media outlets.
- He insists that we participate in meaningful activities together outside of our home – instead of always scattering in different directions for individual activities.
- He challenges us to be present as our children are getting ready for bed and be available as soon as they wake up – so that we can pray with them and direct their hearts toward God.
- He wants our home to be known in the neighborhood as a place that honors God.

Many years ago, as contemporary life became more and more hectic, parents bought into the myth that *quality* time spent with our children is much more important than *quantities* of time. But it has been our personal experience that most of the truly significant times we spent with our children occurred spontaneously – during unplanned moments when we just happened to be available to guide them. Quality time grew out of quantities of time.

As we spend time with our children, we must keep in mind that we are their *parents* – not their *pals*! They may have plenty of friends, but they are only given one set of parents to nurture and train them. God's design is for us to love them unconditionally and lead them intentionally. It is our responsibility to manage their wills, shape their attitudes, and channel their desires.

Ephesians 6:4 says, "*do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*" The KJV translation interprets these two aspects of child raising as "nurture" and admonition." They are both equally necessary. Without nurture (love) we are in jeopardy of raising angry, frustrated children. Without admonition (discipline) they are likely to become spoiled brats.

A book we found tremendously practical and helpful in understanding how to balance love and discipline is *How To Really Love Your Child* by Dr. Ross Campbell. In it he defines four aspects of parenting that are crucial for a child to feel loved. These are eye contact, physical touch, focused attention and discipline. We highly recommend it.

Summary: ***Principle #2: As warrior parents, we must draw our arrows back to ourselves.*** We must commit to being close to our children emotionally, physically and spiritually. This requires us to invest a lot of time and effort. By intentionally walking through life with them, we will be available for every opportunity God gives us to build godly characteristics into their lives.

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