



GWEN'S "TOP 10 BEACH GRIEVANCES"

We recently enjoyed two awesome weeks at the beach. But it wasn't just a vacation. We both find the beach a wonderful place to accomplish a lot of work. So during our most recent get-away to New Smyrna Beach, we spent time working on the itinerary for our upcoming trip to Israel (March 2018), planned Bible study curriculum for the Fall, caught up on emails, and spent a lot of time in prayer.

We did a great deal of work, but we also managed to find plenty of time to play. We rode bikes almost every day, played long hours in the surf and in the pool with our grandchildren – who love this place every bit as much as their daddies did, and Ed even taught one of them how to swim!

In addition, there was ample time for quiet contemplation and astute observation. Consequently, I came up with a list of my **Top 10 Beach Grievances**.

1. To the large family with all the newfangled, instant cabanas: It would have been so much nicer if you had set up your cabana community a little further back from the water line so that other people (like us) could have caught a glimpse of the surf rather than the backside of your not-so-attractive canvas pop-ups.
2. To the father who still envisions himself as a gridiron hero: It's not necessary to show off your arm by throwing a football or tossing Frisbee so far that your teenager has to leap over a grandmother (like moi) who is building sand-castles with her grandkids. Yes, your son made an awesome dive and caught the football before it conked one of the kids on the head, but in the process he kicked a lot of sand in our faces. We chewed on grit for the rest of the afternoon.
3. To the two wanna-be fishermen who showed up every day and never seemed to catch anything: It really isn't wise to plant your pole so far up on the beach that your line stretches across the hard-packed sand where people like to jog and ride their bikes. (I saw one bike rider duck just in time to avoid decapitation.)
4. To the teenagers with the loud music (an issue I may deal with at another time): It is very discourteous to leave your trash behind to poke, trip, cut, disgust or otherwise ruin someone else's experience. The beach is supposed to be a relaxing, happy place. Parents don't want to have to scour it before they set their children free to romp.
5. To the lady who carted multiple bags of popcorn to the beach: I understand that seagulls love popcorn, but you never should have ripped them open and scattered their contents to the winds while surrounded by people sleeping on blankets or resting in chairs. What a rude awakening!
6. To the older couple (probably from Europe judging by the size of their bikinis): Please don't shake the sand off your towels until you are down wind of everyone else on the beach. Others really don't want to spend the rest of the day with a thin layer of sand adhering to their sun-screened bodies or seasoning the contents of their coolers.
7. To the family who showed up for the day with enough luggage to spend a month – including a portable puppy container: There is a sign right where you entered the beach that has a big, red zero with a line through it that includes the word "Pets" along with "Cars", "Cigarettes" and "Glass." This applies to you even if you do own the cutest puppy in the world, because puppies will invariably poop or pee right where someone else will later wish to spread their towel. Yep, I saw yours do it!
8. To that same family: Please don't spray paint your kids with aerosol sunscreen while they are standing within five feet of other families – unless, of course, the wind is not blowing. (Secondary observation: the wind never stops blowing at the beach!)
9. To the bike riders who were obviously in training for an upcoming beach-cruiser race: Look out for the kids! You've got to remember that kids don't ever look to the left or the right when they are dashing up from the surf to show their momma their newest beach treasure. You're lucky those coaster brakes work so well.
10. To the grumpy, old lady writing notes on all the silly things people do incorrectly at the beach: Don't be such a killjoy! Go and have some fun yourself – even if it involves breaking a few arbitrary rules. (Wasn't that a glass bottle of Snapple I noticed hidden in your cooler?)



WARRIOR PARENTING PRINCIPLE #3

We must Aim our Arrows at a Target

Part 4 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.*** There are five principles that Ed and I discovered from this verse that became guidelines for us as we raised our four sons. In previous newsletters we covered the first two:

Principle #1: As warrior parents, we must place our arrows in a Bow – a Source of Power outside of ourselves. We discussed the fact that God is the only Source of True power and that we can only engage His power through prayer.

Principle #2: As warrior parents, we must draw our arrows back to ourselves. We must invest time and energy to effectively draw our children close to ourselves and to God.

This month we will discuss ***Principle #3: As warrior parents, we must aim our arrows at a target.*** This requires us to SET GOALS!

In most of life we are very goal-oriented. We set targets for business ventures, home projects, family vacations, etc. However, when it comes to raising children, most of us completely ignore this important step. We try to do the right things and hope that someday, somehow our kids will turn out okay.

When we do set goals, often they are in the wrong areas. It is very important to point out that God wants us to establish *character goals* – ***NOT achievement goals.*** And there is a huge difference!

Character goals can be accomplished regardless of whether a child becomes a surgeon or a sanitation worker; a physician or a photographer; a lawyer or a laborer. God wants us to bring up children who are honest, content, pure, patient, generous, etc. These qualities are more important to Him than raising children who are great athletes, get into excellent schools, or have all the “right” friendships.

In Proverbs 23:24, God says: *The father [you can read ‘parent’] of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him.*

Notice, He does ***NOT*** say the parent of a major league ballplayer; or a prima ballerina; or a fabulous musician; or the kid with highest SAT scores will have a life marked by joy. It’s the parent whose child is righteous and wise. And both require living within God’s boundaries.

Although we are proud of what all four of our sons have achieved according to the world’s standards, we can honestly say that our joy is not in any of their accomplishments, but rather in the fact that they live to serve God with the abilities He has given them. And we can verify the fact that when we decided to focus on character goals rather than achievement goals, parenting them became a much more joyful experience with a lot less stress!

In order to establish godly character qualities in their lives, we had to first know and understand God’s boundaries. Then we had to find ways to reinforce them. Let me share one example:

When our Jonny was a sophomore in high school, he came home one day and announced that he was going to have to cheat on his next chemistry exam! Evidently one of his friends worked as a classroom aide and knew where the answer-keys to all the multiple-choice exams were kept. He decided to share the answers with his friends.

Jonny declined the “cheat-sheet” prior to the first exam. But the test turned out to be much more difficult than he anticipated and, since the teacher graded on a curve, he was at a distinct disadvantage. The only way he could keep up, he reasoned, was to cheat like so many others did. If he didn’t, he would not get a good grade in chemistry...which would mean he couldn’t get into a good college...which meant he would be stuck in a lousy job...which meant, *“My life will be ruined if I don’t cheat!”*

Jonny was adamant that we not report this little scandal to school authorities. So he and I looked up Scriptures together, and soon realized that cheating was not an option in God’s opinion. We prayed a lot! Following a long discussion, Jonny agreed to study hard, not to cheat, and to trust God. And, since honesty was more important than any grade, I promised not to care what grade he received.

For months it seemed that God didn’t notice Jonny’s integrity. His chemistry grades continued to struggle. But finally the teacher caught on! For the final exam a “dummy” answer-key was placed in the drawer. The test revealed who had studied that year and who had not! The final exam was weighted to reflect it, and Jonny wound up with a good grade. God did notice, and He blessed Jonny’s commitment to honesty!

In the last few decades, society’s standards have changed drastically in many areas of life. But God’s have not! It is more important now than ever that we aim at godly targets and set biblical goals as we raise our children to know Him.

[Next month we will look at #4 of five Principles for Warrior Parenting found in Psalm 127. You can find previous ones on our website 71-17.org]