

The DIAZ Dispatch

September 2017



Luke and his family at Jonny's concert

NONE OF IT WAS WASTED

He was a talented baseball player, but also a bit of a prima donna. Because of his natural abilities, he didn't have to work very hard to keep his varsity position. He didn't listen to advice from his coaches, and he certainly didn't want to waste his time attending weekly chapel meetings. So he didn't.

Ed was one of the coaches who was concerned about AB's attitude and dared to challenge him. At one point during his senior season, Ed remarked, "You may have already received a scholarship offer, but you are not ready to play college ball yet."

"What do ya' mean?" AB shot back angrily.

"You don't work hard so you aren't getting better. You are just sliding by and that isn't going to cut it on the college level," Ed replied honestly, sparking a parental confrontation and a lot of animosity. (How dare anyone speak to their son that way!)

But Ed's prediction proved true. Upon arriving at college, AB quickly realized that if he was going to make the team, he had to get to work. Swallowing his pride, he began implementing the things his high school coaches had tried to teach him earlier. For the first time he saw value in the work ethic they had tried to instill. It was humbling, but he managed to make the team and play all four years of college.

And the best part was yet to come. This past spring AB approached Ed and apologized for his prideful attitude and asked if Ed would spend time catching him up on some of the lessons he had missed during the high school chapels. So Ed led him through the basics of the Christian faith. After just a few meetings, AB accepted Jesus' sacrifice for him on the cross and has been growing steadily in his faith! What at one time seemed like wasted words were actually used by God to make an eternal difference!

A month ago, we received a letter from a girl in Louisiana who had just graduated from high school. The Women's Minister at her church had given her a copy of Gwen's book about teen pregnancies. The book changed her heart and provided a focus for her future. She wrote, "While reading, I couldn't help but feel convicted. I know that I have looked at teenage girls who are pregnant and thought, 'How could they let that happen?' But as written in the book, the only difference between us and teenage mothers is that they have to carry their sin around with them. My heart has changed to be more compassionate and available for teen mothers." She now wants to pursue a career in women's ministry so she can help single teen moms. None of the long hours spent in the research or writing of that book were wasted!

Two weeks ago, Gwen ran into Luke at one of Jonny's concerts. Luke had lived next door to us when our kids were growing up. He was about Ben's age. His life was tough – especially after his mother walked out leaving him and his little brother and step-dad on their own. Frequently she promised to visit and take Luke somewhere special. Repeatedly he waited futilely on the steps for her to show up.

We prayed often for Luke – especially as we watched his pre-teen and teenage years spiral out of control. He dabbled in the gothic lifestyle and witchcraft and drugs. From outward appearances, he didn't desire any kindnesses we had to offer. But evidently things were different on the inside. After a few brushes with the law (and some time spent in jail), he decided to turn his life around. He visited the church he thought we attended because, in his words, "Ben was always so nice to me. I wanted what he had."

As it turns out, it really *wasn't* the church we attended, but it was the one God wanted to use to bring Luke into a relationship with Himself. Through a ministry geared to motorcycle riders, Luke found camaraderie, unconditional love – and the Lord! He is now married with three beautiful children, leads worship and is starting seminary. He was excited to discover how God is using Ben's little brother – and to reconnect with our family. None of Ben's kindnesses in the face of rejection were wasted.

A few days ago, Marsha introduced herself while we were grabbing a quick lunch at Panera: "You don't remember me, I'm sure, but you changed my life and my husband's." She explained that nearly 35 years ago she was going through a difficult time in her marriage, and a friend dragged her to a Bible study. Ed was the teacher. She immediately knew that the relationship with God that he talked about was the one she was searching for. She soon accepted Christ as her savior and it wasn't long before her husband did too. "We worked things out in our marriage, and our lives and our children's lives have been profoundly different ever since. I just wanted you to know." Not one of the hours spent in preparation or presentation of God's Word were wasted. God used them for His eternal purposes.



Our four sons and their wives

WARRIOR PARENTING PRINCIPLE #5

We Must **EXPECT** OUR CHILDREN TO MAKE A SPIRITUAL IMPACT

Part 6 in a series by Ed and Gwen Diaz

In the last five newsletters, we introduced the concept of Warrior Parenting that we discovered in Psalm 127:4. We have already discussed the first four principles that God placed on our hearts as we raised our four sons. [You can find these on our website 71.17.org]

Principle #1: We must first place our arrows in a Bow – a Source of Power outside of ourselves.

Principle #2: In order to prepare them for flight, we must draw our arrows back to ourselves.

Principle #3: Then we must aim our arrows at a target – always focusing on character goals rather than achievement goals.

Principle #4: As warrior parents, we must diligently practice ‘letting our children go!’

This month let’s look at ***Principle #5: As warrior parents, we must EXPECT our children to make a spiritual impact on their world.***

The key word here is “*expect*.” Too often we fail to have firm expectations for our children’s success. We teach them what God’s standards are, and we pray that they will live up to them. But do we really expect them to? In this day and age we often settle for *hoping* or *desiring*.

Without clearly defined expectations, our efforts become little more than suggestions. We are left wondering if our wobbly little arrow will ever make it to the target to experience God’s blessing. Let me offer just three biblical expectations that we feel are imperative:

- We must let our children know that we expect them to be honest – even when everyone else in the classroom is cheating. If we don’t, we make it far less likely for them to experience God’s delight (Prov. 12:22). [We shared much more about honesty in our July newsletter.]

- They must understand that we truly expect them to remain sexually pure until marriage – even though they will be ridiculed. How else can they enjoy the blessings of living in God’s light (Ephesians 5:1-11)?
- They must realize that we expect them to serve others – often before they fulfill their own desires. Otherwise, we are diminishing God’s abundant provision in their lives (Luke 6:38).

In order to clearly communicate our expectations, we found it very helpful to provide our sons with *tangible symbols*: concrete objects and events that prompted them to remember God’s standards and our expectations.

One example is *The Key*. When each of our sons turned 16*, we presented him with a gold key that he could wear on a chain around his neck. We explained that this key was the symbol of his sexual purity. Our expectation was that on his wedding night he would give it as a gift to his wife. It was not just a symbol of our expectation, but a promise of our prayers since we understood that maintaining this standard would be difficult in the current culture.

There are several funny stories that accompany each key. Zach’s led to quite stir at the first college party he attended. “Awww! That is the sweetest thing I have ever heard,” one girl exclaimed after he boldly explained its significance. She promptly called all her sorority sisters over to check it out. As Zach left the party with his baseball buddies, one of them shook his head completely baffled by all the attention Zach had received. “I need to get me one of those keys,” he announced. “Anyone know where I can buy one?” It wasn’t always easy, but our expectations were clear and our sons responded.

Another tangible symbol was *The Blessing Ceremony* we had for each son as he left for college. The Old Testament teaches the value of ceremonially esteeming a grown child. So we chose to do this at a special farewell dinner. After enjoying our son’s favorite meal, we reviewed what God had already done in his life and looked ahead at the special future God had in store for him. We also discussed areas where he might struggle and affirmed our commitment to always be there. Then, after placing a few drops of oil and our hands on his head as signs of our blessing and love, we prayed for him and launched him into the world to make an impact.

Early in our parenting career, God showed us a promise in Proverbs 22:6, and we claimed it: *Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.* He has fulfilled that promise! This doesn’t mean that none of our sons ever stepped off the path we desired for them. But now that they are grown and have families of their own, we praise God that they are all walking closely with Him!

*[Given the current state of morals in our society, if our sons were teenagers right now, we would probably give them the key at a younger age.]