**PARENTAL WARRIORS!**

“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. ***Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth.*** Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate” (Ps.127:3-5). During our recent gospel meeting, brother Truex delivered an outstanding sermon on the above text. As a preacher, this sent my mind down the pathway of “let’s explore this even further.” So, here are some of my thoughts about this passage. I make no claim to originality; I just wanted to bring out these thoughts...

**1. This metaphor means that we are to be parental warriors!** Webster’s Online Dictionary says a warrior is “a person engaged or experienced in warfare; *broadly****:*** *a person engaged in some struggle or conflict.”* As you can see, we are to view parenting as being “engaged in some struggle or conflict.” In this metaphor, our children are, in some sense, our “arrows.” Just as a warrior must someday “shoot” (send forth) his arrows, so a parent must someday send forth their children into a sinful world. As parental warriors, we would do well to consider why, when, where, and how we send them off!

**2. Our “arrows” (children) are to be shot with a purpose!** Just as a warrior does not shoot unless he has a target, so parents must have a target for their children. It is an interesting coincidence that the word “sin” is defined as “missing the mark” (Vine, Thayer, etc.). The opposite of sin is righteousness; *hence the “mark” or “target” that our children must hit is “righteousness”* – that is to be the goal, aim, or purpose for our little “arrows” (i.e. children, cf. Pr.22:6; Ep.6:4).

**3. An arrow does not shoot itself; it must be shot by the warrior!** This means that, as parental warriors, WE must be the ones to aim and shoot (send forth) our children. Stated another way, “The rod and rebuke give wisdom, *but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother”* (Pr.29:15). We must engage in “hands on” parenting! So, in the rest of this article, let’s consider how a mighty warrior must shoot his arrows...

**4. First, we must put our arrow (child) in its place (the bow).** By this, I simply mean that we must establish our parental authority in the home early on. You can’t wait until your child is a teenager, and then expect complete obedience. If you fail to establish that YOU are in charge early on, you will have taught your child that he or she is in charge. Consequently, they will balk at your efforts to get them to comply – and why not? You’ve never made them comply before, so why should they comply now?

**5. Next, we must prepare our arrow to be shot (draw back the bow).** By this, I mean you must give them instruction for leaving the nest. It is NOT “good parenting” to do everything for your child! They must learn to do some things for themselves, because someday you won’t be around. You children need to be prepared to leave the nest someday. Hence, as it becomes age-appropriate, teach them to clean their rooms, to clean the house, to take out the trash, to mow the yard, to get a job, to provide for themselves – to do the things that need to be done. *And don’t forget that the most important thing is to serve the Lord (Josh.24:15)!* This brings me to my next point...

**6. We must point our arrow (child) at the target (take aim).** I have said many times that the main goal of parenting is to teach your children to be Christians. I know that the actual decision to be a Christian is *theirs* to make, and theirs alone; *but if we do not teach them how, it may never happen!* We cannot depend on the world to teach them this; WE must do it. In the final analysis, if you have not taught them to become Christians, then then you have failed as a parent! *Notice carefully that I did NOT say you failed if they do not become Christians (that decision is theirs).* I said you failed if you did not TEACH them to become Christians – and that includes by word and example.

**7. Finally, once we have aimed our arrow, we must let it go!** “Letting go” is the hardest part of parenting. We cannot run their lives forever; that’s a recipe for family disaster. Instead, we can only prepare them to run their own lives – *even if they miss our intended target.* The Commander of the Lord’s army will hold us responsible for being the best parental warriors we can be (2Tm.2:3-4)!

--Lanny Smith