

# *The Aim of Parenting*



*Real Life Studies*



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By Lamont Ross, LPC  
Senior Minister



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*\*Note: All scripture references will be from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise stated.*

*Real Life Studies*  
**Show Me Some ID**

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## **Lesson 1**

### **Building Success**

*Lesson Text: Psalm 127*

Work/life balance is a tension that many people struggle to manage. It seems that if we are winning at one, we are losing at the other. If we don't focus enough on work, we worry we will never achieve anything meaningful with our lives. We are concerned that we will never earn enough money to provide for our families or enjoy our lives. Conversely, if we don't focus enough on our family, we are left with spouses, children, and friends who feel abandoned, alone, and look elsewhere for support, encouragement, direction, and guidance.

Sometimes we feel like we must choose. Do we want a successful career or do we want a healthy family? Do we want to be career-oriented or family-oriented? Some people have burned themselves out in pursuit of success in both career and family, only to feel like they have failed at both.

We are not the first people to struggle with this. It is a perennial human dilemma. Psalm 127 gives insight into God's design for both work and family life. We are given a window into how to approach work and home in a way that is built for success.

Success is built with God (Psalm 127:1-2)!

There are two builders mentioned: God and the human builders. There are two who are responsible for guarding the city: God and the watchman. Building is hard work. It can be unpredictable. Just when you think things are going smoothly, something unexpected happens.

The hard work of building is pointless if you are attempting to build without the Lord. We cannot build our lives apart from God. It is profitless and pointless to attempt to build life without God as the master builder. We build with God, not apart from God.

We are not a passive audience or casual observers of our own lives, waiting on God to do everything for us. We have a role and God has a role. God does not do all of the building for us. He does the building with us. He is the general contractor and we are His subcontractors.

Notice that there is more than one human builder necessary to build a house. The text says “They labor in vain who build it”, not “He labors in vain who builds it.” You cannot build alone. You were not made to build your life by yourself. Life requires that others build with you. Therefore, you need to be wise in who you choose to help you build.

You want to build with people who know the Lord. You want to build with people who will not sabotage your building project. You want to build with people who are willing to build what you are building.

If you want to build a house, don’t build with people who are only interested in building a playground. That bears emphasizing. You cannot build a house with people who are only interested in playing house.

It is counterproductive to build without the Lord. Don’t expect God to bless what you are doing if you are not doing what God is blessing. Build with people who will not waste your time and resources. Build with people who want to build with the Lord.

Sometimes the reason that things don’t turn out how we want them to turn out is because, although we are focused on building with God, we are building with people who are not. Check your circle to see if the people you are building with are building with the Lord. “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.”

“Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.” The watchman was responsible for looking out for approaching danger that would threaten the safety of the city.

Cities were vulnerable to attack especially at night. So the watchman had to stay awake when everyone else was sleeping. If the watchman saw danger, he would sound the alarm to awaken the city. If the watchman went to sleep on the job, it could be disastrous for the city. Cities needed a watchman to protect what had been built. Why build a city only for an enemy to come in and take over or destroy what had been built?

But even if the watchman stayed awake, there was still the possibility that the city would fall. Regardless of the diligence, care, and commitment to duty of the one appointed to guard a city, its safe-keeping depends on God alone.

Fires may break out in spite of the watchmen. A storm may sweep over the city. Groups of armed men and women may assail it. Pestilence and disease may suddenly come into it, and spread desolation through its dwellings. Therefore, the city not only needed a watchman, but also needed the favor of God.

The Psalmist makes the point, that if God isn't the one ultimately protecting the city, even if the watchman never goes to sleep, the city will be captured. The watchman's waking and warning will be useless if the LORD is not the one guarding the city. God protects what He has helped to build. The Lord guards the city.

"It is vain to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors, for He gives sleep to His beloved." The psalmist does not here say that it is improper to rise early; or that there could be no advantage in it; or that we would be more likely to be successful in our pursuits if we did not rise early; but that, although this was done, we are still totally dependent on God. Mere early rising, without the Lord's blessing, will not secure what we hope to accomplish, for everything is still in the hand of God.

Staying up late, and burning the midnight oil does not guarantee success. Health, strength, clearness of mind, and success,

are all under the Lord's control. Though early rising may help to produce all these, we are no less dependent on God for success. It is in vain that we labor hard, and exhaust our strength, in order to get bread to eat, unless God blesses us. After all our toil and hard work, the result is still dependent on the Lord.

We live in a world that bombards us with the myth of radical independence and self-sufficiency. We are told it's up to us and only us to provide what we need. We see it as weakness to rely on others or to express a need. We think if we just work hard enough we won't have to ask for help. It is true that we aren't supposed to live mooching off the hard work of others. As Paul tells the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, "In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: 'If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat.'" But we still need the Lord.

When we build with the Lord, here is what God does: "He gives sleep to those He loves. God bestows "sleep" upon His people in a sense in which it is not bestowed on others. God offers His beloved something that those of the world do not have.

Those who are so anxious and troubled, who rise so early for the sake of gain, who toil so late, and eat the bread of anxious labor do not have the peace or the success that God's beloved have. God makes the minds of His people calm and tranquil, while the world around is filled with anxiety, worry and restlessness. As a consequence of this calmness of mind, and confidence in God, we can enjoy undisturbed sleep at night. We are not kept awake and anxious about worldly affairs. We leave all with God, and He gives us enough peace to go to sleep.

The Lord desires for us to learn cheerful dependence on Him. It is only by the favor of God, and by recognizing our dependence on the Lord that we find peace, success, and freedom from worry.

Human enterprises only succeed by divine blessing. All help, all protection, and all blessing come from God; without Him all labor, care, and effort are vain. There is no point in getting up early to work and working until late at night. The Hebrew phrase “the bread of anxious toil” means the food which one has had to work hard to earn. If God doesn’t intend something for you, you won’t achieve it, no matter how hard you work.

So if we want success, we need to seek the answer the question, “Is this what God wants for me?” Am I in the place where the protection of the Lord is found? Without God in it, there is no point to it or purpose in it. Work done independently of God will be futile. But a person who trusts in the Lord will find rest and success.

### **Reflection Questions**

*Have you ever experienced the feeling of “winning” at one area (work or family) but “losing” in the other? How did that affect you?*

*What qualities should we look for in people we invite to help us build our lives?*

*What would success look like in your life if you defined it the way Psalm 127 defines it?*

*What is the relationship between our effort, God's blessing, and the ability to find rest and peace?*

*What would you say is the key to true "success" for a Christian in both work and family life? How does this definition of success differ from the world's definition?*



## Lesson 2

### The Truth About Children

*Lesson Text: Psalm 127:3*

There is constant pressure upon us to do it all and be it all. Some of the pressure comes from outside influences. Many people try to live up to the expectations of their family members. Your friends affect how you think and what you do. We can be swayed by marketing, corporate sponsored Instagram stars, and the media.

Some of the pressure comes from our internal desire to achieve. We have experienced extreme financial hardships, bankruptcy, repossession, foreclosure and said never again. We may be driven by a desire for our children to have it better than we did. We want to prove those wrong who doubted us.

We are expected to succeed at work, home, church, and community. It can all be overwhelming!

Psalm 127 helps to focus our attention and shift our perspective when it comes to work and family. God has so designed our lives to be built for success. Our lives are built for success when we see family how God sees family.

Psalm 127 should shape how we live each day of our lives. It highlights the intentionality that should exist in our homes. We see the centrality of the home.

For many people the home is no longer central. We spend less and less time there. As a result, we have less and less in common with the other people who live there. And when we are there together, we aren't even sure what to do. So we stare at screens or find other ways to kill time.

Think about how often you are in the same house as other people. Now think of how often you are under the same roof, but not WITH them. In many cases, even when we are together, we are separate.

When we don't understand the value and importance of the home in the formation and development of our spiritual lives, we spend more and more time investing in our work, working

longer and longer hours, and justifying it by saying we are trying to provide. The problem is that eventually we begin to see family like an inconvenience, or an encumbrance; something that is getting in the way of us realizing our full potential and enjoying our best life.

That is not the biblical view. The biblical view is “children are a gift of the Lord.” The Biblical view is that family is the real world. The home is the center of life and God is the center of the home. Children are a heritage, a legacy, a reward, and a blessing. The text lets us know how God views family.

During biblical times, children had no status in society. Some saw them as more of a liability than an asset. However, God sees children differently. God sees children as a gift and a reward.

God gives children as a blessing to the people. Children come from God. He forms and shapes them. Children, realize just how special you are. Adults, let me speak briefly to your childhood self. It is your childhood-self that heavily shapes who you are as an adult. Some of us did not recognize our value when we were kids. We did not have people around us who validated us, supported us, and encouraged us. Now as adults, we find ourselves still trying to prove our value to people, and in some cases, trying to convince ourselves of our worth. Some of us had some deep hurts in our childhood. Our childhood hurts can become our adult hang-ups.

You are fearfully and wonderfully made. You are created in the very image of God. God did something amazing when He made you! You are uniquely qualified to be you. God tells the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:5, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

God shaped you. He formed you. And on top of that, before the Lord formed you, He knew you. God knew you before there was a you to know. Even if your parents didn’t plan you, God purposed you. Even if you feel like you don’t fit in with the other kids at school and have been rejected by others, you are accepted by God. God consecrated you. He set you apart as holy. You were born so that God could use you for His good works.

Don't let anyone tell you that you don't matter. Don't let anyone convince you that you are not significant. When you start to question the value of your life, when you question why you are here, and when dark thoughts attempt to flood your mind with the false narrative that your life means nothing, listen to the Word of the Lord. You exist because God wanted you here. You are God's gift to your parents. Your life has meaning, value and purpose. You were created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that you would walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

When you see yourself as a blessing to your parents and a gift from God, it changes how you think, how you act, how you talk, and how you live. It changes who you are. Children are a blessing, not a burden. Although children are a blessing, if we are honest, sometimes they can feel like a burden.

Here's the thing: a blessing can be easily confused with a burden because they are both heavy! God gives heavy blessings. Genesis 1:27-28 states: God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (NASB)

God blessed them, but the blessing came with a responsibility. However, the responsibility did not make the blessing a burden. It was heavy, but it was still a blessing. The greatest blessings often come with a stewardship responsibility. We have a responsibility to wisely and faithfully manage what God has blessed us with.

Parenting is heavy. It is a weighty responsibility, but its weight does not negate the fact that it is a blessing. Often, the heavier a blessing is, the more faith you need in order to see it for what it is. If you look at parenting without faith, you will focus on the heaviness of parenting (lack of time for yourself; interrupted sleep; the expense of diapers; the inconvenience of a blowout; how much kids eat as they grow; the drama of the teenage years; paying for this sport and that activity; the increase in your car

insurance once your kid has a license.) Without faith, you will focus on the problems. But when you view parenting with faith, you will see the eternal impact that is possible. The hard parts are only temporary. They are only for a season, but the impact that you have on your children can bless them for eternity. Parenting is heavy, but it is a blessing.

Children are a blessing because they help their parents be less selfish. Having children causes you to put the needs of the child before our own comfort, plans, and entertainment. Daily, children give us an opportunity to give of ourselves, deny self and esteem others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3).

Children provide us with a mirror to more accurately see ourselves. Children model what their parents do and imitate who their parents are. They imitate our talk and walk. They repeat what we say. We are the answer to the question, “Where did they get that from?” They likely got it from us.

Teaching our children about obedience reinforces our own obedience to God. It is in wanting to teach our children obedience that we learn better obedience. Children can call out our hypocrisy. They help us to stay on the straight path. Some of us didn’t get serious about our faith walk until we had children.

As we teach our children to forgive, we are reminded of our need to forgive. As we teach them to share, we are led to evaluate our generosity. As we teach them to pray, we are challenged in our prayer lives.

Children also help us experience joy. There is deep contentment and delight gained when interacting with your children. Spending time with them, teaching them, observing them as they grow into their own unique personalities, and ideally, watching them commit their lives to Christ produces great satisfaction and gladness in us as parents. There is a proper pride associated with watching our children grow up into responsible, nurturing, converted adults.

Children help us depend on God more and release our desire for control. There are some things that we experience in the course of parenting to which we don’t know how to respond. There are some questions we can’t answer. We cannot be

everywhere with our children. But God is everywhere. We pray to God that He protects and covers them. Children remind us that we are not in control. They show us that life is unpredictable and that it will not fit into our perfect little plan.

Furthermore, children help us develop patience. Teaching children involves patience. They teach us long suffering as we teach them life skills.

Having children and watching them grow instills admiration in God's miraculous creation. There is the miracle of child birth. The development of the human brain and body throughout infancy and childhood is a testament to God's matchless abilities as the Creator of all life. The ability of children to be resilient and bounce back when they are knocked down.

Our children give us a much-needed glimpse of our own relationship with God the Father. The parallels between parents and our children, and God and His children are undeniable. Interacting with our own children gives us valuable insight into how God the Father sees us. We are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26); our children look a lot like us. God is our ultimate authority; we are to raise our children and be their leaders (Ephesians 6:1-4). We go to God the Father in prayer for comfort and guidance; our children come to us for comfort and reassurance. As parents, we quickly learn how patient, loving, and merciful God is with us, because we learn to exercise that same patience and love with our children, even when they are being disobedient or defiant. We see how God loves us in spite of us.

Do I trust God like my children trust me?

Being a parent is a blessing, but it is a heavy blessing. Since parenting is heavy, we need to pause before putting pressure on couples to have children. You don't know their situation. People also pressure couples to have more children. You don't know what they had to go through to get the one that they got.

If a couple does not have children, that does not mean that they are not blessed by God. Not everyone will get married. Not everyone will have children. But all adults can value children, pray for them, be good examples for them to emulate, and see that

children are protected, cared for and encouraged in their spiritual upbringing. Every baby born is God's way of ensuring the future of humanity and is an opportunity to help make some new beginnings.

### **Reflection Questions**

*The lesson mentions external and internal pressures we face, from social media to family expectations to past hardships. Which of these pressures do you find most difficult to manage in your own life, and why?*

*What internal drives (fear of failure, financial security, wanting better for your family, proving doubters wrong, etc.) most affect your decisions? What are the benefits and drawbacks of this motivator?*

*Can you think of an example from your own life of a "heavy blessing" (e.g., a challenging job, a major responsibility, a difficult relationship) that required faith to see its value?*

*What are some practical ways we can make the home more intentional and spiritually centered?*

*What are ways single adults, childless couples, or older adults can still live out Psalm 127's teaching by valuing and supporting children?*

### **Lesson 3**

#### **Aim High (Part 1)**

*Lesson Text: Psalm 127:3-5*

After introducing the idea that children are a blessing, the psalmist moves to providing insight into how children are a blessing.

This Psalm is written by Solomon. We have here the words of one who had it all, did it all, saw it all, and he concluded that if God isn't building it, the work is pointless. If God isn't protecting it, then the effort is useless. It doesn't matter how prepared, well trained, and well-armed you are, God must be in it for it to succeed.

Solomon also lets us know that children are a legacy, a gift, and a reward. Children are evidence of the favor of God.

The Psalmist compares children to arrows in the hand of a warrior. The arrows are in the hand of a warrior. They are not in storage. It was not sufficient to just have arrows in the quiver. The warrior was obligated to have them not merely at hand, but in the hand, in order to use them.

These arrows are not in the hand of just any person. The arrows are in the hand of a warrior. They are in the hand of someone with the skill and experience to defeat enemies and conquer nations.

The quiver is a case in which arrows are carried; and as a warrior feels secure when he has his quiver full of arrows, so is one blessed in proportion to the number of his or her children. This is in accordance with the idea often presented in the Bible, and the promise often made there of a numerous offspring as a proof of the Divine favor.

In a sense, as the warrior or the hunter relies on his arrows, so children are what a parent may rely on for defense in danger, or for help in securing provisions for himself and family.

The enemies in the gate are a man's adversaries in a legal dispute; the open space near the inner gate of the city was the place where legal disputes were settled (see Ruth 4:1-2; Job 29:7-17). If a man had a number of grown sons with him, that man

would be more likely to win in a legal dispute with his adversaries. The idea is that when you have children when you are young, your children will be old enough to provide security for you when you are old.

Children are able to defend your honor and preserve your dignity as you age. Children can serve as character witnesses when you are accused by others. They can testify as to the type of woman and man they know their mother and father to be.

Adult children have an obligation to their parents. Honoring your mother and father does not end when you turn 18. It does not end when you leave home. As a child, your parents protect you. When you become an adult, you protect your parents.

Protect them from the enemies that seek to take advantage of the elderly. Protect them from scammers and schemers. Help them deal with medical challenges. Encourage them. Help preserve their dignity. Protect them from making unwise financial decisions. Look out for them as their cognitive functioning declines due aging or dementia.

Protect your parents, don't exploit your parents. It is a sin and crime for you to steal from your parents. Aging parents should be protected by their adult children. They should not have to be protected from their adult children.

Children are a blessing to their parents. So the question is, "How are you blessing your parents?" Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth.

If you think about arrows, what they are for, and how to use one, you can get a picture of what home life is supposed to be about. It is a very fitting description for parenting. Arrows require forming and sharpening. Before an arrow can be used, it has to be formed and shaped. And its point needs to be sharpened.

Arrow heads do not just appear. The shaft and the fletching don't just magically appear, ready for use. Raw materials have to be assembled, formed, and fashioned into the shape of an arrow.



The home is a primary place that God uses to sharpen us. That is but to say that the home is the primary place for making disciples. Discipleship is about growing into greater conformity with who God is and who He created us to be.

Proverbs 27:17 states “Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another.” The home is the place where children should receive their spiritual formation. The home is the place where children get their shape. The forming and the shaping happen through parental example and parental instruction.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 states, 4 “Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one., 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. 7 Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead., 9 Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates (CSB).

The text highlights the fact that godly parenting must be intentional. If we love God, we will cherish His word in our hearts. When His word is in our hearts, it will come out of our mouths. It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. The mouth speaks from that which fills the heart (Luke 6:45).

When the word fills our heart, we will share God and His word with our children. What you share with your children shapes your children. Don’t expect them to know what you don’t tell them. You have to teach and repeat.

We should not punish our children for violating a rule or guiding life principal that we have not taught them. We cannot assume that our children know what we know. They know what we tell them. Don’t expect them to know what you don’t tell them.

Don’t expect children to follow what you don’t show them. Children will do what you show them more than they will do what you tell them. There are some concepts that are best learned by doing. But we have to show them how to do what we

expect them to do. This requires patience because it involves repetition. There is a large degree of repetition that is involved in parenting.

If you have ever sharpened a knife, you know that you have to apply the sharpening tool to the metal several times before the knife is sharp. Don't think that your children will get the message the first time. You will have to repeat it.

As they age, you will need to repeat it again and again because the message hits differently as your children age. You can add layers to the teaching. The same scripture hits deeper at age 14 than it did at 4. Reading your Bible at age 6 is different from studying your Bible at age 16. The text speaks of repetition. It also speaks of integration.

Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. The sharing of the Word is in no way confined to a classroom setting. The Word is taught in the laboratory of life.

Take advantage of opportunities to integrate the Word of God into the flow of your time with your children. As they experience life, show them how the Word of God has a relevant Word for what they are experiencing. As they are contemplating decisions, show them the wisdom that is in scripture. Share scriptures with them that speak to their experiences, their fears, worries, anxieties. What does the Word of the Lord say about current events?

As we do this, our children will be sharpened. They will take shape. As they are being formed, they will be transformed. Like arrows, children need to be sharpened.

### **Reflection Questions**

*Why is repetition such a necessary part of parenting and discipleship?*

*The lesson compares raising children to forming and sharpening an arrow. What are the "raw materials" of a child's character and spiritual life that need to be "formed and fashioned"?*

*If you have children, how has your role as a parent or guardian been a process of "sharpening" you as well?*

*If you don't have children, how can you still apply the principles of forming and sharpening in your relationships (e.g., with younger people, friends, or mentees)?*

## **Lesson 4**

### **Aim High (Part 2)**

*Lesson Text: Psalm 127:3-5*

In the previous lesson we looked at the parenting analogy of children being like arrows. Like arrows, children have to be shaped and sharpened.

In addition to the need for arrows to be shaped and sharpened, arrows also require aiming. Even the sharpest arrow is useless unless it is aimed, pointed in the right direction.

In archery, there are best practices for aiming. One is that you must assume the correct shooting stance. You are to be perpendicular to the target. Your feet are to be firmly planted.

We live in a society that is so eager for everyone to be happy that we don't want to tell anyone else what to do. And since we want everyone to be free to do whatever they want, we end up leaving people feeling directionless. So many people wander through life not sure of which path to pick. Too many options lead to the paralysis of analysis. There are all of these choices, how do I pick one?

The home is the place where there are people who can aim us in the right direction. The home guides us to Jesus and helps us discover who God made us to be.

Our world is as bad as it is because too many parents refuse to guide their children in the right direction. The mindset

is, “Let them make their own choices. I didn’t like it when my parents told me what to do, so I am going to let my children decide on their own. They will figure it out just like I did.” Too many parents have failed to give their children a framework for functioning and decision making. As a result, people are over-medicated because they don’t know how to cope with life and its problems. We have to give your children a framework for functioning in life. That framework should be rooted in faith in Christ.

Many children today are so fragile because parents have not given them a framework of faith for functioning in life. Now there are people, even Christians, who need medication for their anxiety and depression in order to stabilize their mood and regulate hormones. So, if you need it take it. I am not telling anyone to stop taking their medication. My point is that our society has turned to medication for solutions to problems that are best solved by the Messiah.

Studies have shown that faith decreases feelings of anxiety and depression. I don’t believe that it is merely a coincidence that as the number of Christians in America has decreased, prescriptions for anti-anxiety and anti-depression medications have dramatically increased.

Parents, your stance matters. Give your children a framework of faith for functioning. As parents, our feet need to be firmly planted on the word of God. Your stance helps you focus on the target and aim in the right direction. Plant your feet and stand firm.

Not everything should be an option for your children. Proverbs 22:6 still says, “Train up a child in the way that he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” There are some things that your children should not be allowed to do while they are living under your roof. There are some things that your children should do that are non-negotiable, because you have a responsibility to train them in the way that they should go.

If a child does not go the way that he or she should go, it should not be because you did not train them. Children need aiming so that they don't wander around aimless.

Here is the thing about aiming arrows: There are many arrows, but just one target. There are carbon arrows, aluminum arrows, wood arrows, fiberglass arrows, but only one target. No matter which type of arrow you use, the goal is still to hit the target.

No matter how many children you have, the target is the same. My wife and I have three children with three different personalities, but the target is the same. It doesn't matter if one child is an introvert and another is an extravert, the target is the same. One may be good at math and another better in English, but the target is the same. One may be a girl and the other a boy, but the target is the same. One may be a Virgo and the other a Capricorn, but the target is the same. One may be good at playing baseball and another at playing the bass guitar, but the target is the same.

Yes, we have to take into account the personality, abilities, and make-up of each child, but we are aiming them all at the same place. The target is love the Lord your God with all of your heart; love your neighbor as you love yourself. They may grow up to be electricians, doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, entrepreneurs, or teachers. That is secondary to the fact that we should be aiming them towards the Christ who hung and died on an old rugged cross, was buried in a borrowed tomb, and the rose on the third day with all power in His hand! Whether they go on to make \$10/hour or \$10/minute, your aim should be that they lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Aim high so that as much as it depends on you, your children will reach heaven to live eternally with the Lord. Arrows require aiming.

Arrows also require launching. Even a sharp arrow pointed in the right direction is useless unless it is launched. In

archery there is a technique to releasing the arrow. Release the arrow by relaxing the fingers of your string hand. While this may sound simple, the manner in which you release your fingers from the bowstring can impact the arrow's flight. The goal is to get as clean a release as possible and as a beginner, this will probably take time.

Problems that you may encounter when releasing the bow include flinching, wobbling or anticipating the shot inaccurately. Anything that deflects the string from the way you remove your fingers can alter the arrow's course. Arrows are meant to fly, and you have to open your hand.

God has given us the family as the place to launch each of us out into the world to achieve the tasks for which we have been intended to achieve, to run the race that is set before us. As our children are growing, we must learn to relax our grip so that they can fly. We cannot control every aspect of their lives. They need some freedom to make choices while they are still at home, so that the mistakes that they make are made within the safety of the home. Children need practice launches. Do some practice launches first, and make any necessary adjustments, so that when launch day comes, things are more likely to go smoothly.

You have heard the stories, and likely know some people whose parents held on too tightly for too long. And then when the child goes off to college, he or she cannot handle the freedom. Remember that parenting is a propulsion system, not a prison system. Train up a child in the way he should **go**. A man shall **leave** his mother and father. Keep the end in mind from the beginning. The goal is to launch them. Your baby won't remain your baby forever. Babies are to be launched as they grow from girls and boys to women and men. If you hold on too tightly, like arrows, children may wobble, be deflected off course, and miss the target. Arrows require launching.

Arrows extend your reach. Arrows go where the archer can't or shouldn't go himself or herself. He or she can shoot an

arrow over a wall that they can't climb. The arrow can reach heights the archer cannot.

I want my kids to reach new heights for the Lord. I want them to go further than I ever imagined. As I am investing time and energy into them, I pray that they will take what I give them and build on it and be better than I am.

Parents, your children will take your influence with them all the days of their lives. Make sure that what you are giving them is what you want to live on after you die. You will forever have an impact on your children. And when they touch the lives of other people, part of the influence that they will have on others is the influence that you had on them. The more children you impact, the further your reach extends.

You don't have to have children to impact children. You can be a mentor. Serve as a big brother or big sister. You may be a teacher or youth worker. Children extend your reach.

Arrows are weapons of war. Arrows are offensive weapons that go behind enemy lines to claim the victory for the king. Our children are launched into the world to be difference makers. They are those who attack the structures and systems of the world, the principalities and powers. They are those who are formed, shaped, aimed, and launched to share the message of the gospel with a new generation and serve the purpose of God in their generation.

This is war. The enemy is not a political party. It is not a radical hate group. It is not the government or its representatives. The enemy is Satan, who, according to 2 Corinthians 4:4, has blinded the eyes of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. We have been launched into the world as ambassadors for Christ, inviting all to join the winning side. This is war and arrows are weapons of war. You only get one shot per arrow. Aim high.

Become a follower of Christ. If you are not a Christian, put your faith in Jesus. Make the decision to follow Him and turn

from following the world. Confess Jesus as Lord and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins. Once you are a Christian, prepare to be launched by studying the word, worshipping with the body of Christ, and living for God. If you would like help along the journey, please contact us at 214-941-2531 or [www.marsalisavenuecoc.org](http://www.marsalisavenuecoc.org).

### **Reflection Questions**

*What is the line between giving a child freedom to choose and providing a clear framework for functioning and decision making?*

*How does a parent's understanding of the ultimate one target influence their day-to-day parenting decisions?*

*What are some examples of “practice launches” you’ve seen or experienced that prepared children for independence?*

*How can the analogies of shaping, sharpening, aiming, and launching be applied to areas of life other than parenting?*