

People are talking about . . .

One Million Arrows

“*One Million Arrows* is a great wake-up call for parents of this generation. If we want our children to take part in the powerful purpose and unique mission God has designed for them, we’ve got to take responsibility for raising our kids as disciples of Christ.”

—Josh D. McDowell
Author and Speaker

“God has called His people to leave a legacy of godliness for the next generation. *One Million Arrows* picks up on that high calling and casts a God-sized vision for parents who long to see their children used by God in mighty ways. I believe it will motivate you to invest in the lives of orphans and it will challenge you to raise your children as ambassadors for Christ rather than casualties of the culture-war.”

—Dennis Rainey
President, FamilyLife

“The spiritual and physical needs of children in other countries—especially the orphaned and abandoned—are enormous. However, by investing in them, we can make a great difference in our world. As shown in *One Million Arrows*, many of these children are becoming evangelists and church planters for Christ’s glory. I encourage you and your family to pray and become involved as God leads you.”

—Franklin Graham
President and CEO, BGEA and Samaritan’s Purse

“As parents, we need to encourage our teens to stand against the negative media that is constantly trying to influence them. *One Million Arrows* is a must read for parents who aspire to disciple their kids as world changers, recreating culture around them.”

—Ron Luce
President and Founder, Teen Mania Ministries

“Every once in a while, an opportunity comes along that’s so big and breathtaking—and so justifiably right—you have to say, ‘Okay, you got me. Where do I sign up?’ Such is the opportunity Julie Ferwerda unpacks in *One Million Arrows*.”

—Dr. John Hull
President and CEO, EQUIP and ISS
(INJOY Stewardship Services)

“*One Million Arrows* is not just a book . . . it’s part of a vision that’s already taking place on every continent in the lives of God’s young people. If you’re ready for you and your family to truly make a difference in this world, this book is for you.”

—Dr. Alvin Reid
Professor of Evangelism and
Associate Dean for Proclamation,
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“As seen in *One Million Arrows*, God is doing something special in this generation—He’s stirring the hearts of our children, urging them to be ready and willing to become part of a mighty movement. Read this book, and embrace the power and phenomenal beauty of parenting your children for a special purpose. May we get our families involved to love those less fortunate than we are, and may the seriousness of discipling our children and grandchildren become a reality of doing and not just talking.”

—Thelma Wells
Founder, A Woman of God Ministries and
National Conference Speaker

“I speak both as a father and a missionary to orphans; *One Million Arrows* deals with the most important issue facing the evangelical world today, and that is making disciples of our own children instead of expecting someone else to do it while we pursue other things. There is no more urgent pursuit, no more essential need than raising our children to know and love Christ.”

—Clayton King
Founder and President, Crossroads Worldwide

“*One Million Arrows* provides a challenge we all need to hear. If you care about children and if you want them to change their world, this book is a must. Telling real stories about real people, Julie Ferwerda provides practical and exciting ideas about how to position our children above the selfish mediocrity that brands so many kids. This book shows what’s possible with a God who can make all things possible. I love it and want to live it and share it with my friends. Thank you, Julie, for giving parents a challenge and a strategy for raising kids who can change their world for God.”

—**Dr. Steve Stephens**
Marriage and Family Psychologist, Author

“It has been my honor to work with Julie Ferwerda, a follower of Christ whose passion for her faith shines brightly in her writing. I am always on the lookout for books that encourage American believers to remember the world outside their own communities. Julie’s *One Million Arrows* reminds us that being a neighbor to the physically and spiritually downtrodden is a vital part of our personal walk with the Lord. Her book was a blessing to me personally as I consider both the practical application of this aspect of my faith, and how I will instill in my children a fervor to show God’s love to the people outside their own culture.”

—**Stephen McGarvey**
Executive Editor, Crosswalk.com and Christianity.com

“Julie Ferwerda’s vision for *One Million Arrows* needs to be heard and caught by the Christian community of the 21st century. She rightly senses that we live in a time of great opportunity for the advance of God’s Kingdom, but it will take daring, commitment, and sacrifice to make it happen—along with the wisdom to start young and focus on the children of this generation. Anyone passionately committed to advancing God’s kingdom should read this.”

—**David Guzik**
Director of Calvary Chapel Bible College, Germany
Author of David Guzik’s Bible Commentary

ONE MILLION ARROWS

"One Million Arrows . . . casts a God-sized vision for parents who long to see their children used by God in mighty ways." —Dennis Rainey

RAISING YOUR CHILDREN TO CHANGE THE WORLD

JULIE FERWERDA

WinePress  Publishing™

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*Children born to a young man are like sharp arrows in a warrior's hands.
How happy is the man whose quiver is full of them!*

—Psalm 127:4-5

For Papa. You are the closest thing to God's love I've ever known in this world. May your vision of one million arrows for God be something you see with your very own eyes on this side of eternity. Thank you for choosing to do the hard things so that you might be used to bring hope, inspiration, and purpose into the lives of parents and children on every continent.

This book is also dedicated to all of the wonderful orphan ministries worldwide that are gathering once purposeless children and sharpening them as arrows for the Kingdom to finish the most important work in this world—fulfilling The Great Commission.

And for my own nearly honed arrows, Danielle and Jessica—I am so proud of you, and I know that you both are going to continue to light up the world for Jesus.



In honor of Dr. M.A. Thomas' (Papa's) vision, all proceeds from this book are designated for international orphan arrow ministry.

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered if there's a grander purpose for our children, beyond growing up to become responsible, productive adults who happen to be Christians? There is! It's absolutely true! Our kids can be trained to become part of an epic, spiritual movement in our day. Through role modeling, training, and encouragement, they can become part of a vision to deliver a more profound and eternal impact on this world than we ever thought possible.

Our guiding light shines from many individuals, families, and ministries who have blazed the trail before us. One man in particular, a father of many world-changers, will personally guide us through this book with his revolutionary vision: *one million arrows for God*—one million children gathered, sharpened, and launched to make an eternal difference in their communities, cultures, countries, and even the world at large.

Please note that this book is not promoting any particular ministry, but it's a vision and a *mission* all families can take part in together. What is this *mission*? It has echoed through the centuries, from the words of Moses all the way to the words of God's own Son 1,500 years later. In my own words, this God-given mission imparted by Jesus goes something like this: "Even after I'm gone from this place, I want you to go and teach people how to be My followers. First, start with your children. Train them to follow Me, and then train them by example to help others follow Me—family, friends, classmates, and neighbors. Then think about how your family might bring My love and the Good News of My salvation to your community and even your country. But don't stop there! I will show you how your family can impact others around the world, until all nations have heard about Me and have been told of My gift of eternal life! Yes, I will use your children to change the world with My love . . . *if you show them the way.*"

PART I

GATHER

*We will not hide these truths from our children
but will tell the next generation about the
glorious deeds of the LORD.*

*We will tell of His power and the mighty miracles He did.
For He issued His decree to Jacob; He gave His law to Israel.
He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children,
so the next generation might know them—
even the children not yet born—
that they in turn might teach their children.*

*So each generation can set its hope anew on God,
remembering His glorious miracles and obeying His commands.*

*Then they will not be like their ancestors—
stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful,
refusing to give their hearts to God.*

—Psalm 78:4–8

CHAPTER 1



DETERMINE YOUR COURSE

And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children . . . Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

—Deuteronomy 6:5–9

Destiny is not a matter of chance. It is a matter of choice.

—William Jennings Bryan¹

What were you doing on 9/11?

I'd just cranked up the tunes and hopped on my Nordic Track as part of my normal morning routine, when my husband called from work to tell me to turn on the TV. Watching the events unfold, I don't think I've ever felt as helpless or as horrified as I did that day. The world no longer seemed like the safe, secure place I thought it was only one day before. In the worst way, I wanted to keep my two girls, ages seven and ten, out of school that day to protect them and reassure them until the danger had passed.

For the rest of that day, and many more to come, the surreal sights on TV haunted me: planes striking the buildings; massive explosions; the sudden, momentary collapse—twice—of 110 floors of elaborately constructed concrete, steel, and glass that took years to erect; and the mountains of debris that smoked and smoldered for many days. But nothing shook me as much as the unforgettable images of human bodies spilling out of the buildings like grains of rice. Neither those who lived through it, nor those of us who watched the shocking events unfold on TV, will ever forget.

One young man I read about, Cary Sheih, a technical consultant from New York, barely made it out alive. Working on a project for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey at his 72nd floor desk, he'd just finished his usual mid-morning PB&J, when he heard an explosion, followed by tremendous building sways and vibrations. At first, he thought it might be an earthquake, so he dashed to the stairwell, where a quick, but calm, evacuation was underway. As people made their way down, some received messages on their cell phones that an airplane had accidentally crashed into the building, but there was no mention of a terrorist attack.

With the heavy, choking stench of jet fuel, descending the tower proved difficult. But if it was difficult for him, he couldn't imagine how difficult it was for the rescue crews he passed, huffing their way up an endless corkscrew of stairs and then hurrying back down, carrying badly injured and burned victims. He recalls, "Sometime around the 30th or 40th floor, we passed the first firefighters coming up the stairs. They reassured people that we were safe and that we would all get out fine. By this point, they were absolutely breathless, but still pushing upward, slowly and unyieldingly, one step at a time. I could only imagine how tired they were, carrying their axes, hoses, and heavy outfits, climbing up all those stairs. Young men started offering [to help] the firemen to carry up their gear for a few flights, but they all refused. Each and every one of them."²

As Cary neared the bottom, the building began to shake and sway again, the lights flickered out, and eerie sounds of buckling steel accompanied screams of people falling down the stairwell. After being assisted by

firemen through darkness to a different stairwell, a panicked Cary somehow made it down the last few flights to safety, where his wildest imagination couldn't have prepared him for what he encountered. The burning trees, wreckage, fireballs, and dust resembled *a war zone*.

While reading through this and other accounts concerning 9/11, I noticed an inspiring, recurrent theme. While there were many, many heroes and selfless individuals working tirelessly to assist throughout this tragic period, it was the *firemen* who undoubtedly made some of the greatest sacrifices of all, and whose ultimate acts of bravery impacted lives worldwide. While most everyone else scrambled for the exit signs to save themselves (which I'm positive I would have done, too), these rescue workers fearlessly *headed up into the towering infernos* that day, many likely aware that they might not make it out alive.

Most kids see firefighters as larger than life heroes, which is probably why many of them want to be one when they grow up. Who wouldn't want to be thought of as a hero, especially one that saved lives? I came across a touching book report that was written about 9/11 by three kids:

The firefighters of 9/11 are heroes because they have saved the lives of hundreds of people, while they knew the building could collapse. While you go up a burning, 110-story building you would be very scared, because you'll think of your own life. When you are a firefighter you mustn't think too much about your own life or you may not be able to save lives. Being a hero means saving lives. That's the difference between being a celebrity and being a hero. Why would a celebrity be important to you? It is just someone with a well-paying job. You'll be someone's hero if you help him with his or her life.³

As I think about what these insightful kids have so magnificently articulated about the qualities of firemen, particularly the 9/11 firemen, I'm deeply moved with admiration and respect. In an emergency, firemen are:

- ↔ First responders, well-trained, and ready to save lives, even at the expense of their own.
- ↔ Purposeful and deliberate, aware that lives are at stake and time is short.
- ↔ Doggedly determined, knowing that the more lives they can save the better.
- ↔ Regarded in both life and death as the heroes of this world.

No one involved in 9/11 could disagree with this assessment. Remembering the expressions of both courage and fear etched on rescue workers' faces as they spoke reassuringly to guide many people to safety, Cary Sheih said, "I am so grateful for the courage of the firemen and policemen who gave up their lives to help us down the burning tower. As I relive this moment over and over in my mind, I can't help but think that these courageous firemen already knew in their minds that they would not make it out of the building alive, and that they didn't want to endanger any more civilians or prevent one less person from making it to safety."⁴

While they will undoubtedly go down in history as larger than life heroes, we can't forget how human and vulnerable they were, too. I have looked through their pictures online. Most of them were young family men, with their whole lives ahead of them—men who kissed their own babies goodnight on Monday for the last time so that those they helped to safety could kiss their kids goodnight many more nights to come. They unknowingly said final goodbyes to their own families Tuesday morning so that many others could come home to their families that night.

In the moment of the realization of the grave danger, it had to be a dilemma for the firemen, choosing between lion-hearted courage and paralyzing, self-protective fear. How were they able to do it? Was it because it was their job? Because their buddies were doing it? Because their captain told them to do it? What exactly is it that leads a person to choose a profession where courage must prevail when all pretenses and rewards are stripped away in the face of death?

More than a job identity or a paycheck, more than an obligation or a hope of any kind of recognition, firemen are willing to risk their lives and to face their fears because they are motivated by something far greater than fear.

The Bible refers to this motivating force as *love*! Authentic, selfless love drives away fear (1 John 4:18). And it was the love—not the duty—of those firemen and emergency workers that truly made them heroes of the day, both the ones who died and the ones who worked doggedly through the wreckage, many suffering permanent damage to their lungs and bodies. And that kind of sacrifice, according to Jesus Christ, is love at its very best. “I command you to love each other in the same way that I love you. And here is how to measure it—*the greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends*” (John 15:12–13, emphasis mine).

Firemen of Life

So what does all this talk about 9/11 and firemen have to do with parenting? If you're a follower of Christ and you want to raise children who are also followers of Christ, quite a lot. And if you want to entertain the possibility of raising children who will change the world around them, and even the world at large, everything!

It's no secret that every day on this earth, countless lives are at stake. People are dying every day who do not know Jesus, and almost just as bad, people are *living* every day who do not know Jesus. I don't know about you, but I cannot imagine struggling through the hardships, losses, disappointments, and sorrows of this world without the comfort and peace of knowing Jesus and His love. And we know that someday soon, this world full of magnificent structures, along with all the people who have not put their faith in Christ, will collapse in a catastrophic fire (Zephaniah 1:18).

In other words, time is running out.

The seriousness of that reality raises some questions: What is my family here for? As believers, is parenting a more significant and eternity-

impacting role than we've given it credit for? Are we satisfied with happy, well-adjusted, even ambitious kids who happen to love God, or is there something more?

It is at this crossroads that we will explore the invitation we've been offered—a divine invitation to become a part of His-Story. As this story unfolds throughout the space of our lives, which role will our family accept in this cosmic emergency? Hopefully not the victims. Hopefully not the ones running scared to save ourselves (and I am absolutely not criticizing those who made it out on 9/11—this is for spiritual application only). Hopefully not uninvolved bystanders who are disinterested, unable, or ill-equipped to do anything but watch.

I've realized that, in the grand scheme of life, more than just raising my kids to “keep the faith,” I want to raise my kids to save lives. *I want to raise firemen*. Not necessarily the earthly fire-fighting kind, but the heavenly fire-fighting kind. Kids who are well-trained and ready to help save as many lives as possible. Kids who grow up, remembering at the forefront of everything they do, that time is short and lives are at stake, and who will one day be seen as spiritual heroes for helping many lives to safety.

I want to raise kids who love like Jesus.

Just think what it would be like to have kids who grow up in this self-destructing world with brave faces and hope in their voices, carrying within their hearts the ambition of bringing as many people as possible safely into the Kingdom. I believe that this kind of holy ambition is the secret to life at its best, and I want my kids to experience this kind of life. Jesus said, “If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life” (Matthew 16:25). And therein, we hear the invitation: *Will you raise your kids to be firemen? Will you be a fireman for God's sake?* We may never be called to die for Jesus like so many others in our world today, but we are still called to a holy rescue mission—to live sacrificially for God so that others will be led to safety through our loving assistance.

Rebels with a Cause

I recently met two brothers, both firemen of the Kingdom variety, who understand about saving lives by choosing to deliberately head into burning buildings. For them, the rescue mission all started with a small idea and a heart to snatch their fellow teens from a dangerous culture.

At age sixteen, twins Alex and Brett Harris decided to start a little blog in their spare time over the summer called *TheRebellion.com*, with the intent of *starting a teenage rebellion*. “The word ‘rebellion’ is a combination of the words ‘rebellion’ and ‘revolution,’” explains Brett. “So it carries a sense of an uprising against social norms. But in this case, it’s not a rebellion against God-established authority, but against the low expectations of our society. It’s a refusal to be defined by our ungodly, rebellious culture.” To their astonishment, within a couple years, their site had received over 14 million hits, becoming the most popular Christian teen blog on the web.

As a follow up, they decided to write a book for teens called *Do Hard Things*, exhorting young people not to take the easy way out, but to do those things that seem harder now but have a bigger payoff in the end (as in “delayed gratification”). Since then, God has opened doors for them to speak to thousands of teens nationwide through conferences that are planned, organized, and run primarily by youth.

More than just a website, *The Rebellion* is both a mindset and a movement. “Our goal,” according to the brothers, “is to create a community of young people where thinking deeply is the norm, and where achieving excellence is ‘cool.’ History says young people can be doing big things *right now!* Don’t let the culture’s expectations toward teenagers dictate what you think is possible. The teen years are not a vacation from responsibility. They are the training ground of future leaders who dare to be responsible now.”⁵

Whether from media, parents, authority figures, or peers, low expectations have become the rule for this generation, rather than the exception. Not only are kids expected *not* to possess admirable character or useful competence,

but also they are expected to do the opposite. *The Rebellion* defies this kind of thinking by calling out youth to return to biblical and historical levels of character and competence as exhorted by Paul in 1 Timothy 4:12: “Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.”

Their message, based on their belief that God is raising up their generation for global change, is a passionate call back to excellence, purpose, and significance for young people. It’s not about doing *more* things, or inflicting oneself with toilsome chores; it’s about lifestyle choices that will often take you out of your comfort zone and into places where you are focused on using your abilities and resources to encourage and benefit others . . . ultimately to save lives.

“Brett and I firmly believe we are living in historic times,” Alex says. “We further believe that God is raising up a generation of young people who will one day assume positions of leadership in all spheres of life: social, political, and spiritual. This is not a call for the complacent or the lackadaisical. This is not a call to those who are willing to lower their standards to meet the expectations of their culture. *This is a call to the rebelutionary.*”

Initially I wondered how two kids could possibly have achieved so many bold and bright accomplishments, not to mention how they’ve acquired more wisdom than many adults. Was it handed to them? Do they harbor a special gene pool (their parents might agree with that notion)? Did they turn out like this by chance?

Actually, Alex and Brett would probably be ordinary kids, except for one thing. They had parents who believed in making the sacrifices necessary to raise their kids to make a difference. Kids who, in turn, learned to make sacrifices in order to serve others. They had parents who devoted themselves to raising *firemen*. Keeping this at the forefront of their parenting strategy, Mom and Dad Harris raised kids who understood and accepted the fact that it was going to take a lot of hard work for everyone in order to succeed

in this goal. As a result of this mentality, these young men have literally started a *Rebellion* across our nation . . . and our world.

There are actually two other grown children from the Harris home. One of them, Joshua, became a best-selling author at the age of twenty, with the book *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* (Multnomah 1997). He went on to write more bestsellers, developed purity seminars for young people, and toured as a national conference speaker in front of hundreds of thousands of young people, calling them out of their culture to a lifestyle of purity. At age twenty-seven, he became the senior pastor of a large church, where he still serves today.

In 2002, another brother, Joel, launched the Northwest Academy of Worship Music to help raise up worship leaders and worship teams for local churches in the Portland area, where over 150 students of all ages have been successfully trained. Since 2007, he's also been using his music skills to lead worship for *The Rebellion Tour*.

As I got to know the Harris family, I saw that “chance” and “opportunity” had nothing to do with their parenting success. “If our teen years have been different than most,” says Alex, “it’s not because we are somehow better than other teens, but because we’ve been motivated by that simple but very big idea filtering down from our parents’ example and training: *Do hard things.*”

With four out of four grown children serving the Lord and significantly impacting their world, it’s obvious that the Harrises are doing something right. And I’ve discovered that this “something” is available to all parents. Throughout this book, we’re going to visit with more parents like these to find out exactly what they are doing to shape godly kids who are ready and able to help save lives, no matter what their limitations or circumstances. Turning out kids like these is not just possible—it’s possible for you and your family with just a few moderate but important lifestyle changes.

Parenting is, really, at the heart of Jesus’ command for discipleship. It’s teaching our kids to live with Jesus and to love like Jesus. It does require a

cost, as anything worthwhile does, but that cost will be far outweighed by the benefits and rewards. God has created our kids with unique abilities, gifts, and desires for a very special purpose. All they need now is to be trained and ready, available for divinely appointed opportunities.

So now it's time to ask: Do we truly want to give our kids the best of everything we have to offer in the short time we have to impact their lives? Do we want our kids to live—and someday die—the spiritual heroes of this world? If we have answered “yes,” then it's time to learn about a vision for our families that's so amazing; it will change the course of history.

My discovery all started on a little trip I took to northwest India.

CHAPTER 2



JOIN THE VISION

Then the Lord told Abram, “Leave your country, your relatives, and your father’s house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others. . . . All the families of the earth will be blessed through you.”

—Genesis 12:1–3

God said that all children are arrows in the hands of the mighty Man, Jesus Christ. All we have to do in order to evangelize the whole world is to take the arrows and place them into Jesus’ hands.

—Dr. M.A. Thomas (Papa)¹

In February 2007, I was about to discover the special vision from a revolutionary parent that would totally change my life. It all started when I had an unexpected invitation to go to India to teach at a writers’ conference. But

when that fell through after I'd already purchased my plane ticket, some fluky circumstances brought about a chance for me to go to northwest India for some freelance writing opportunities. It was there that I met and spent significant time with a man named Mullanakuzhiyil Abraham Thomas (not conducive to rhymed poetry). Only a few days into my trip, I was absolutely certain this was a divine appointment.

Now in his early seventies, M.A. Thomas, known as "Papa" to many thousands throughout India and even the world, came across as a simple, warm, unhurried man, who was genuinely interested in others. In fact, even after talking to him for several days, I had no idea that he'd earned many accolades as an influential leader throughout India for his extensive and widespread ministries to the downtrodden. The Padma Shri Award (one of the highest Indian civilian awards) for humanitarian contribution, the Mahatma Gandhi Award for his work with the needy, and his Mother Teresa Award for social justice are all proof of his deep love and committed service to his countrymen. Most political and ministry leaders within India are quite familiar with M.A. Thomas, yet I found him to be completely unimpressed with himself, and most everything I learned about his achievements came from others.

As my month-long trip to India progressed, I learned about Papa's extreme visionary parenting. In the role of a loving father, he's bringing about change in India and throughout the world. While his early work as a missionary and church planter began in 1960, he later began rescuing orphaned and abandoned children off the streets of India in 1978, and raising them in his "Hope Homes." In these homes, they experience family love and belonging, and receive a top-rate education, as well as the opportunity and training to become disciples and servants of Christ. Since then, Papa's "father of the fatherless" ministry has become one of the largest Christian ministries in India, with over 21,000 pastors and missionaries trained and sent to the mission field, a majority of them once abandoned children. His ministry has also expanded to the countries of Malawi and Haiti.

The call on Papa's life for missions came when he was twenty years old and in Bible college in Madras, India (now called Chennai). While attending a special conference, he heard a message taken from Isaiah 6:8: "Whom will I send? Who will go for us?" That night, the unmistakable voice of the Holy Spirit extended the invitation to him, and he willingly gave his dreams and future to God in total surrender. Not long after that, God directed him through fasting and prayer to go to Rajasthan, a state in northwest India with very little, if any, Christian influence back in the 1960s.

The day before his Bible college graduation, Papa didn't have the money to travel to Rajasthan, but he was still determined to obey God and leave for his mission the very next day. Later that same day, a man came to the campus to recruit Papa to head up the India branch of his American ministry. The job offered great perks: a comfortable salary, rent money, and even medical expenses. This established ministry is well-known today as Campus Crusade. The man offering Papa the job? *Bill Bright*.

"Dr. Bright," Papa responded, "if you'd asked me six months ago, I would have joined you. But I have promised my Lord that I will go to north India to pioneer a mission, and to establish churches. Even though God hasn't given me train fare yet, I'm not going to change my promise to Him." If the money didn't come in, Papa and his newly pregnant wife had already made the decision together to walk more than 1,400 miles to his destination, despite her morning sickness. Is it any surprise that the money for train fare miraculously came in from many sources, just in time for departure?

Inspired by the faith and obedience of his fellow evangelist, Bill Bright graciously offered to pay \$25 a month for Papa's rent for the first year on the mission field, where Papa began devoting his life to this spiritually dark and hostile region. Only two weeks after he arrived, he began enduring persecution by radical anti-Christians, a reality that has continued throughout his ministry to this day. Beatings, burned Bibles and churches, constant

threats, rapes, expensive legal cases, financial penalties, imprisonment, and sometimes martyrdom have been forms of mistreatment for practically all mission-minded Christians in this and many other parts of India.

In the early years after moving to Rajasthan, he began establishing churches and Bible institutes to train willing new believers to be missionaries and church planters. His biggest desire was to train enough missionaries and pastors to go to every village and city in India that had never heard about Jesus—a number estimated at as many as 600,000 back in those days.

As these native workers went out to set up community worship centers—multi-purpose centers for church and outreach projects—each center would, in time, build Christian schools and medical facilities. This led to more worship centers being built in neighboring communities, and provided more students interested in attending Bible college to go to even more villages and cities.

It was a brilliant plan, but there was one huge obstacle. It was a painstakingly slow process finding enough young men and women who were ready and willing to devote their lives to full-time Christian service in this capacity. Of the new believers trickling into the fold from Papa's evangelizing efforts, many had spouses, families, or other earthly ties that held them back from becoming a part of his colossal dream, not to mention many were deterred by the threat of persecution. It all seemed impossible.

A Multitude for Jesus

More than fifteen years later, in the late 1970s, Papa began asking God what could be done about all the orphaned, abandoned, and desperate children he saw every day scrounging on the streets or even “selling” themselves just to acquire the basic necessities of life. Their sadness became his sadness as he imagined a life with no love or educational opportunities to escape the hopeless prison they were born into.

Especially tugging at his heart were the kids growing up in leprosy-affected colonies, because, even more than most, they had zero chance for a successful future. It's hard to estimate how many leprosy-affected live in India—the highest of any country—but it's in the millions. Because of pervasive religious superstitions in their culture, leprosy-affected people are thought of as being punished for being evil in a previous life. No one wants to touch them or show them kindness, because it's believed they “deserve this lot in life.” Any person showing them kindness or helping them in any way “comes under a curse.” Leprosy-affected people and their children are considered the lowest of the low, and they are completely rejected by practically all of society.

Papa thought about the senselessness of their suffering. It was an ocean of a problem, one that could not be impacted at the adult level, since the effects of leprosy are visible and irreversible. However, leprosy usually takes years to be transmitted from parent to child. Papa realized that in order to make a difference, the answer would be to help their children break out of this cycle by removing them from the colony before it was too late. The children could be loved, nurtured, educated, and most importantly, given eternal hope through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

When they grew up and became confident, healthy citizens and educated leaders, they could spread the love of God wherever they lived and worked by demonstrating the power of the Gospel message with their redeemed lives. When they visited their homes, their parents would see their meaningful and successful lives and be drawn to the amazing, life-changing power of the Gospel. In this way, a true difference could be made for this large group of people.

And so, spurred on by the faith-based work of George Muller, a nineteenth century visionary who provided for 2,100 orphans daily by relying solely on God's provision through prayer, Papa decided to open up his own home as an orphanage—the first of many “Hope Homes”—for these kinds of children.

“Lord,” he prayed, “if I had as many orphans and destitute children as Mr. Mueller, what a multitude they would be for Jesus Christ!” Papa would be able to spiritually train all the children who came to him, and to potentially acquire even more students someday for the Bible institutes—students who could have the opportunity to prepare to go to the villages who had never heard about Jesus as pastors, doctors, nurses, and teachers—all messengers of the Good News. It surely seemed to be the answer to Papa’s nagging life question: *How do I find enough messengers to bring the love of Jesus to every people, tribe, nation, and language, according to Revelation 7:9?*

A God-Sized Vision

Usually when God is in the process of unfolding a plan in our lives, it gradually illuminates, like a dark landscape at sunrise. That’s why it’s crucial that we maintain our dependence on His daily guidance. Anyone can receive a promise or a vision and get busy working towards it on his or her own, but without the *continuous* guidance of the Holy Spirit, grand plans taken into our own hands fall flat, or worse, lead us into trouble. It’s the faithful years of relationship with God, one prayer at a time, where great, world-changing work is accomplished.

In 1997, after nineteen years of faithful, daily dependence on God in orphan ministry, sometimes including as many as six hours of focused prayer in a given day, Papa reflected on God’s leading in his life. By then he’d raised his sought after multitude of 2,000 children in the many Hope Homes now located across India, and he had personally trained many of them in his Bible institutes for full-time ministry. It was then that the Holy Spirit directed him to the verse that put the TNT to his dream, becoming his guiding light in ministry for the rest of his days on earth.

The verse was Psalm 127:3–5: “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. As arrows are in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy, blessed, and fortunate is the man whose quiver is filled with them!” (AMP).

Papa absolutely knew God was telling him something profound through this verse, because instead of bringing him comfort, it struck him with deep sadness. Yes, he had ministered to many children, but there were many millions more—maybe as many as 80 million in India alone—desperately scrounging and clawing their way through gutters, trying to find a life worth living on the streets, in train stations, in brothels, and in leper colonies, all of them unsuccessfully. *Lord, if children are your gift and reward to mankind, why are so many of them as broken and unwanted as dead branches? How could so many throw-aways of society become a blessing to anyone? What do you want me to do?*

And then the rest of the vision flooded in as bright light, deliberately and forcefully squeezing its way through an opening doorway. There was indeed a way that Papa could see his own lifelong dream fulfilled of establishing a Christian ministry in all of the cities and villages throughout India that had never heard about Jesus, while at the same time helping so many children become God's great gift and reward to this earth.

One million arrows for God.

As the picture waxed crystal clear, the sadness Papa felt was replaced by great joy! *Gather* one million broken branches—the native-born, orphaned, and abandoned children—*sharpen* them with education, faith, and a heart for The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20), and *launch* them like arrows back into all the regions of India that have never heard about Jesus. In fact, why limit it to India? Papa realized this model could work anywhere. There were many such broken branches worldwide that could do the same in their own native countries!

In the modern world, where western missionaries are being denied access into many countries and regions, who better appointed to bring the Gospel to transform villages, cities, and even countries with the love of Christ than the locals—those who already speak the language and know the culture as their own? The more he thought about it, the more Papa imagined that the redeeming work of God in these precious children's lives

could be the beginning of a mighty movement, one that would someday bring a great multitude of souls into the Kingdom of God worldwide. And this great vision was well on its way since the Hope Homes had already been established for nearly twenty years.

Besides the benefits for each child—a redeemed past, a purposeful present, and a future living with Jesus in His Kingdom—these children were also a great benefit to the ministry because of their extreme devotion, lack of earthly ties, and gratitude toward Christ.

There are so many miraculous testimonies that display Papa's successful model in action, but one of my favorite pictures of the complete redemption potential, nineteen-year-old Napoleon, is sort of a modern-day Joseph story.

Napoleon lived a comfortable lifestyle with his family of five in a large South India city. But one day, when he was six years old, the police came and arrested his entire family, falsely accusing them of being Naxalites, or anti-government terrorists. Even though they were soon released without charges, the social pressures and superstitions present in India made them a threat to their friends and family. Overnight, they lost everything and everyone that mattered.

Packing few belongings, the family boarded a train. Later, when they stopped at a station, Napoleon watched his dad give his older brother and sister some money and send them off, he assumed for food. But the train left without them, and Napoleon never saw them again. Then, after the train got up to full speed, he watched in disbelief as his parents intentionally jumped off the train to their deaths. The train conductor told six-year-old Napoleon that, by law, he had to disembark at the next station to claim the bodies and arrange having them removed from the station.

He spent the next year living on trains, cleaning floors and shining shoes to try to make enough money to eat. Once he rode the train farther than usual and ended up in a state where he couldn't speak the language, as each state in India has its own language. A seemingly caring woman spotted him and led him to a home, where she served him a plate of food.

Ravenous, he ate every bite. Only after the meal did he realize it was a set up—the woman turned him in to the police for stealing.

Napoleon spent the next ten years in a youth corrections facility, along with other kids who were mostly hardened criminals. During this time, a man came to visit him regularly and eventually led him to Christ, and then helped him get into one of Papa's orphanages where his faith blossomed.

"I'm so thankful to God for rescuing me," Napoleon, now a first-year student in Papa's main Bible college, says. "If He hadn't brought me here, I'd be an atheist by now, but God chose me and brought me here at the right moment so that I could know Him. My biggest desire is to become a state government official so that I can help the poor, underprivileged, and minority people."

Even with all the bad stuff that's happened to him, Napoleon's not bitter. "If God hadn't allowed me to get put into the juvenile corrections facility, I'd still be on the train, begging and shining shoes to survive. God used that experience to bring me to this place today so that I could help others."

It's no wonder that kids like Napoleon are willing to devote their lives to carry on Papa's legacy. Their gratitude for being rescued from the pit of death and despair is immense.

Passion and Vision Growing

Papa, an earthly father of the fatherless, has more children today than ever restored to the quiver of God's blessing to this earth because of his faithfulness. More than 16,000 broken children's lives have been gathered and restored through his love, with at least two-thirds of those devoting their lives to full-time ministry as pastors, evangelists, teachers, and medical professionals. Most of the others have become educated professionals and leaders, with a variety of respectable jobs, who also use their life vocations as a means to spread the Good News about Jesus Christ in their work places and communities. It is conservatively estimated that 95 percent of

the grown Hope Home children are serving the Lord to this day, whether part time or full time.

And that's not all. In addition to all the children who have been rescued since the late 1970s, there are offshoots of this ministry reaching into many lives throughout India, including thousands of community worship centers in cities and villages; for-profit Christian schools (they help fund the orphanages); over one hundred small Bible institutes and two larger Bible colleges, from which over 21,000 students have graduated for the ministry; a major hospital; medical clinics; leprosy and prostitute outreaches; tsunami ministries; and more than seventy Hope Homes.

With all that work behind him, you'd think an aged man who has shepherded thousands of orphans and pastors would be ready to retire on a sunny beach with a stack of good reading material. How many of us would be thinking: *Isn't it time for someone else to take over and give me a break? I've done my time, and now, after almost fifty years of trials, persecutions, and intense labor, my momentum is waning. I'm ready to move on with my retirement!*

Like any devoted parent who never stops investing in his kids and grandkids, nothing could be further from reality for Papa. Retirement isn't in his vocabulary because he knows that earth is *the work*, and heaven is *the rest*. Even though his biological son, Samuel, is shouldering much of the workload and responsibility these days, Papa feels his dream growing more vivid and reachable by the day, and that's what keeps him pursuing the vision with excitement and energy. His critical job of fathering and discipling a multitude for Christ is far from finished, and he still wants to see the dream of *one million arrows for God* reached before he takes his last breath.

Today Papa says, "The Lord is preparing me and using me more now than ever before. I feel the closest presence and fellowship with Him, and I have more vision and more burden and more commitment than ever before."

Bringing Papa's Vision Home

Papa's vision is inspiring and revolutionary. His commitment to unwanted children is more than admirable. But that's in India. What does his story have to do with you and me? What does it have to do with us raising our children to be the world's heroes? Actually, his vision for raising arrows is a vision for all parents, and it's something that can and should happen in every country and every culture.

An arrow of God doesn't have to be in full-time ministry, but is always focused unwaveringly on bringing the love of Jesus Christ into every aspect of the journey throughout his or her life. Along with raising a daughter who might decide to become a heart surgeon, I also want to prepare her to be ready and able to be used as a healer of hearts. In addition to raising a child who decides to become a teacher, I also want to prepare her to be a disciple-maker of Christ. Instead of raising my girls to have an affinity for international travel, I'd like to take it a step further and give them the opportunity to develop a heart for missions. Instead of raising channel changers, I most definitely want to raise world changers.

"There is a difference between the man who goes into medicine because science, service, and humanity course through his veins, and the man who sees it as a lucrative career," Voddie Baucham, author of *Family Driven Faith*, explains. "One man is pursuing the best the world has to offer; the other is pursuing the best he has to offer the world."²

My biggest dream for my kids has become for them to always have at the core of everything they do—every motivation and thought—the desire to search for God's dreams for their lives, asking questions like: *How can I make a difference in this world? What did God create me to do on this planet to help accomplish His purposes? How can my life be truly fulfilling? How can I become an arrow for God?*

The Enemy wishes nothing more than to coax our kids, if not into rebellion, into pursuing passionless, insignificant, and potentially empty

lives. As long as he can hamstring them with apathy, he need not worry about them doing damage to his kingdom. But now, like Papa, we've been given the exciting opportunity to raise arrows—weapons of warfare. Our kids have been put on this earth for a great purpose and a *mission*.

But we can hardly sit back and think that our kids are the only ones singled out for such grand plans. How will they know unless we teach them from our own habits and experiences? How will they catch it unless we model it for them consistently? Just like Papa, God wants to use the shepherds and shapers of *His children* to bring about change by raising them to become—as we are becoming—sharp arrows in the hands of Jesus Christ, prepared as skillful weapons against the kingdom of darkness.

Remember, there's a war going on in the heavenlies. Our children can either be pawns unaware, or they can be weapons of mass destruction against forces of evil in the unseen realm. We've got a choice to make. "It's the righteous man who lives for the next generation," says Dennis Rainey of FamilyLife Ministries. "This is not the time for peace, it's time for war. Raise your kids to become arrows for war."³ Only then will our kids be the conquerors God intended, not the casualties.

As Andrew Murray, one of the fathers of the faith, states in his book *Raising Your Children for Christ*, "Let us devote every child to God and His service. Let us stop praying that our children will be saved if we are not willing to offer them for His service. Let us lay each child upon the altar. Let us seek this one thing—that they may become worthy and equipped to be set apart for the service of the King. Let your example teach the Church that there are those who, because they love their children most intensely, know nothing better for them than to yield them to the will and the work of their God."⁴

Papa leads this kind of world-changer parenting by example. He's provided a roadmap for us of visionary parenting at its best—parenting that focuses less on what your family can do for God and more importantly on what God wants to do through your family.

Papa is not simply a visionary parent. I personally believe his purpose is much bigger than that. Leaving his homeland in south India to move 1,400 miles to an uncharted destination selected by God in north India, he has now become the father of a multitude of orphans who are currently blessing and changing their world for Christ. I believe Papa is truly *a modern day Abraham*.

How exciting is this? You and I can join Papa, raising our kids to be part of his vision of one million arrows for God. We are definitely in need of a great awakening in our country, and our families have more opportunity now than ever before to reach across neighborhoods, cities, states, and even borders to make a difference.

Someday, we are going to leave this world. Our kids are going to leave this world. Until then, what are we here for? Will we model for them fireman-like courage, raising them to leave behind that same kind of legacy for their children? Will we raise them to offer their lives—their time, talents, and resources—so that others can know Jesus? There's never been a better time to get started, because something is going down in history, and you're going to want to take part in it. *It's time to own the mission.*

CHAPTER 6



SHAPE ARROWS BEYOND

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop.

—2 Corinthians 9:6

God is pursuing with omnipotent passion a worldwide purpose of gathering joyful worshipers for Himself from every tribe and tongue and people and nation . . . Therefore, let us bring our affections into line with His, and, for the sake of His name, let us renounce the quest for worldly comforts and join His global purpose.

—John Piper¹

Edward Lorenz, a mathematician and meteorologist at MIT, discovered through experiments with mathematical equations in 1961 that the flap of a single butterfly's wings in South America could actually start a chain of events that impacted the weather all the way up in North America. And

according to his findings, one flap of a seagull's wings could forever alter weather patterns.²

If a single butterfly can leave a mark on the world through simply doing what it was made to do—flapping its wings—what could we accomplish as humans made in God's image if we were to do what God has made us to do? As parents using our gifts and abilities for *the mission*, what could we accomplish by investing in one more child (or even a few) in order to effect change that carries into other countries and even continents? What would it look like?

Imagine for a moment that, like Papa, you decide to add to your quiver one abandoned child who needs a second chance at a purposeful life. So you adopt a baby boy from Africa. Say your efforts successfully sharpen this uniquely gifted young man as a faithful and empowered arrow of God who devotes himself wholeheartedly to *the mission*. As he grows up, he decides to go back to his native country as a missionary. Sharing the Gospel wherever he goes, he leads many to Christ, and those new believers begin sharing Christ, too. Pretty soon, whole families become believers and they begin spreading the Good News within their communities. After a lifetime, the web of lives you've impacted for eternity by that decision to parent one more child in addition to your own is more than you could possibly have imagined.

But then, go a step further. Imagine after you die and are resurrected into your real home, God puts on a little party in your honor. To this "little get together," He invites all the people whose lives have been rescued and impacted spiritually as a result of your intentional decision to invest in a child outside your own biological family. There are so many people in attendance that you can't even count them all—happy, smiling people, from villages and even cities all over Africa, hugging, laughing, and expressing their gratitude to you for giving them a chance to hear the Good News about Jesus. What amazing eternal returns on your relatively small investment of flapping your wings just to parent one more child.

Guess what? *You can do this.* Starting right now, you can adopt an orphan quite literally, or you can also ripple this kind of butterfly effect throughout the world without even going to the effort of actually raising any more kids in your home. The hard work of gathering and raising these children is already being done for you, if you so choose. Thanks to the many arrow ministries already in operation worldwide, including the U.S., you can easily invest in arrow shaping without changing your family dynamics or routine!

Shaping arrows beyond means that we are looking outside our own families for ways to invest in *the mission* through the lives of others. After all, every person and every family shoulders the responsibility of the Great Commission—to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20). No exceptions. So why not invest in tomorrow’s generation—the kids who could change the course of a country and go down in His-Story?

As Americans, you and I, without a doubt, have the financial resources, with a little priority rearranging, to “go to nations” with our efforts or at least our money, by investing in young people who are being shaped by many different arrow ministries. While adoption of these kids is a great option for some families, I’m also excited about investing in kids who are currently being raised up in their own cultures to bring lasting change through the love of Christ to their local villages, cities, and countries. As we take this step, we teach our children the second part of the two-fold, crucial component of arrow making (after becoming an arrow) of investing in other arrows that are carrying the love of God where we are not able to go. And I think investing in other *kids* is one of the best ways to get our kids spiritually and emotionally engaged in this aspect of *the mission*.

There are many great arrow-shaping ministries for children, both nationally and internationally, and we’ll discuss in coming chapters some of the ways to get involved. For work in other countries, I recommend investing in organizations that are shaping children through the means of special orphanages or homes—24/7 environments—designed specifically

to develop children for *the mission* and to nurture them in all areas of life. Some of the great arrow-type ministries following this kind of discipleship model on several continents, including Papa's, are listed in the resources section at the end of the book. Two ministries in particular that are networking every aspect of orphan care worldwide are the Christian Alliance for Orphans, and Viva Network (Patrick McDonald of chapter 4).

Closer to home, there are also many opportunities to invest in American kids doing short-term missions to other countries, (investing in your own kids' missions experiences is the first priority, of course). This worthy investment helps interested young people develop a heart for *the mission* and gives them a chance to learn about other cultures. Many kids come from families that can't afford to send their kids on mission trips, but they still have the desire to make a difference and to use their God-given talents on the mission field.

One youth ministry that's drawing teens from all over the country for various aspects of ministry, Teen Mania, has a heartbeat "to provoke a young generation to passionately pursue Jesus Christ and to take His life-giving message to the ends of the earth." A non-denominational ministry, they provide evangelism and service opportunities for preteens, teens, and young adult leaders on six continents for short-term trips. To date, they have taken over 50,000 teen missionaries to fifty countries around the globe.³ My older daughter has been to both Brazil and Peru with this ministry and had fantastic, life-changing experiences on both trips.

Youth with a Mission (YWAM) also began as a non-denominational youth missionary ministry, but now includes all ages. They have operations in 160 countries and have over 16,000 full-time volunteer workers in 1,100 locations internationally. They train 25,000 short-term missionaries annually.⁴

What a great investment, keeping our young people engaged in *the mission* by helping them reach out to the world!

A very cool spin on investing in children outside your own home and even outside your country is this: *You don't have to biologically reproduce in*

order to become a spiritual parent. Spiritual parenting can be just as meaningful and impacting as traditional parenting in matters of eternity, and can take on many forms. You can invest time, talents, prayer, money, possessions, and skills into shaping kids locally, nationally, or even internationally.

Papa had his own biological children, but God showed him throughout the years that spiritual parenting—whether his own kids or others who have no spiritual guidance or heritage—is one of the most important investments of his time on this earth. Whether it be Papa launching thousands of sharpened arrows each year and unleashing the Gospel into the lives of many thousands more, or you and me investing in as many children as possible in whatever ways we can, our spiritual offspring could potentially be limitless.

Now that could turn into some party!

Kids on a Mission

There's nothing quite so amazing as being awakened at the crack of dawn to the sound of little kids worshipping God in song at the tops of their lungs. Who in the world could stay in bed and miss out on that? In my recent trips overseas, I've had this magical experience in both cities and remote, tribal villages. It's my favorite part of the trips.

In such places, I've met children who are being shaped into arrows by loving and devoted workers. These children have everything they need because of financial supporters, mainly in America, who are faithfully investing in them financially and prayerfully. For kids who live in these true arrow homes, every day of their lives is a training day. Just like any good family, there is love, discipline, and plenty of responsibility. And the kids carry that sense of family into their adult lives, feeling the continuing love and support of their adoptive homes. Both the workers who are physically raising them on the field and the financial supporters who are making it possible are engaged in a team effort of spiritually parenting these kids. Without either part of the team, there would be no way to ready these kids for *the mission*.

I believe these previously unwanted kids have been chosen by God to reap a great harvest of souls in their countries by using their unique backgrounds, gifts, and passion for the Gospel. Who's to say the child I invest in can't become the next Papa in his (or her) own country, or the next Billy Graham or Ron Luce (Teen Mania) in ours? I believe God is going to specifically credit and reward those who invest in any way in His kids who have been set apart for *the mission*. Just think, your family could invest in a young woman like Jennie.

Jennie

Jennie knows nothing about her south India parents except that, as a newborn, they threw her away and left her for dead in a city dumpster. Some college boys happened by and heard her crying, so they picked her up out of the garbage and took her to a nearby orphanage.

Jennie was so bright that she graduated from Bible college at sixteen. Her instructors noticed how mature and responsible she was at such a young age and how she had a heart for helping children, so they sent her to help out at an orphanage for younger children for one year of on-the-job training. When the main caregiver at that orphanage was called to another location to help out during a time of need, seventeen-year-old Jennie took over. For the past two years, she's been taking care of an entire orphanage of eight younger children with the help of an assistant, Mary, who's now sixteen and also an orphan.

This position is a good fit for Jennie, who loves kids and feels privileged to serve them. "You don't have to give up everything you love to make a difference," she says. "It starts by thinking about others, then showing them the love that God has shown you. In this way He will use you to transform lives."⁵

God is definitely using Jennie's love, experiences, and training to do just that for the little ones under her care. "When the children get sad and start crying for their parents, I can understand their pain and comfort them

better than anyone else because I've been in their shoes. I'm able to give the love and care that they want and need, just like my caretakers showed me God's love when I was a child. I feel like a mother to them now."

Understandably, Jennie gets tired and discouraged with so much responsibility on her young shoulders. Some of the kids are mischievous, and sometimes food for the kids is in short supply during periods of financial hardship or persecution on the ministry. At those times, she wonders if she's doing the right thing. But then she remembers that when she came to work at the orphanage, she committed herself to serving the orphans with her best efforts. So instead of fretting, Jennie says she prays, asking God to give her strength to continue taking care of them. She relies on Him to be her protector and provider, her Father and Mother—her everything.

Her faith has grown immensely as a result of relying on God's provision and care. Once, when her cupboards were bare, God miraculously supplied food from neighbors. Another time, when one of the children missed the school bus, a man stopped by unexpectedly to see if she needed anything, so he was able to take the girl to school.

Once an orphan, now taking care of orphans, does Jennie have any regrets? "If I didn't know Jesus, I wouldn't be serving these children now. I'd be out living on the streets—if I was even alive." She believes that she will raise these kids to grow up and take care of others in the same way.

Imagine that. Young Jennie—an arrow raising more arrows. It's exciting to think how far reaching your influence could be on a young life like Jennie's by spiritually parenting her through financial support.

Lily

A thousand miles away, in a remote tribal village of northeastern India, Lily is another young woman making a mark on the world. When she was thirteen, children in her village began showing up at her house during her visits home on school breaks, asking her to teach them. Boarding at

an orphanage in a village some distance away from her home, just so she could attend school, Lily became the most educated person in her whole village, one of the few who could read. It was her dream to someday return to her village and open a school.

Now Lily is twenty-one, and her dream is becoming a reality. With high school and Bible college under her belt, she has moved back to her family's village, where fifty-seven kids come to her every day for schooling. The village families are so excited about this; they have begun looking for some land where they can build a school for her to teach their children.

"The parents of the children believe in me and trust me to teach their children," says Lily. "They have been so encouraging." Sadly, this contrasts the opinions of her family and friends, who think Lily is too quiet and fragile to run a school by herself. "They don't know who I am on the inside," Lily confides. "I may seem unable, small, and weak on the outside, but I'm a very strong person on the inside."⁶

Lily is most excited about how she will impact her village with the love of Christ. The first subject she teaches every day is biblical studies, and after school she offers a devotional time with singing and more Bible teaching. She says her students are enthusiastic in learning about God and the Bible. Eventually she hopes to start more schools in other, nearby villages.

There are many Lilys who need faithful partners in order to bring Christ back to their own people. How amazing would it be for your family to know you were helping teach fifty-seven kids in a remote village you'd never even seen? The party is still growing.

Justin

Closer to home, maybe you could also add a young man like Justin Dobrenz to your growing spiritual family. I first met Justin when he was working at a Christian summer youth camp in northern Wyoming. Anyone who chooses to take care of manic, mischievous kids 24/7 for an entire summer has to either be in the witness protection program, or quite

possibly have a total heart for kid ministry. But rumor has it that the perks are more than worth it—“refreshing” early morning showers, completely restful sleep between three and six a.m., and just enough summer earnings to cover your travel expenses back to college. For me, it sounds about as much fun as the dental school root canal volunteer program, or maybe a third world boot camp in Phoenix in July. But for Justin, and many of the other awesome counselors who come back year after year to serve and mentor kids, it is being an arrow.

After two years as a camp counselor, Justin decided to do something a little less dangerous (and more relaxing) than entertaining today’s youth. He decided to become a Bible smuggler. At age twenty-one he went to work for Vision Beyond Borders, an organization that specializes in taking translated Bibles and evangelistic tools into the underground church in China and other parts of Asia, as well as Cuba, Turkey, Morocco, and Romania, with the purpose of equipping the local people for *the mission*. Currently this organization has hand-delivered over 600,000 contraband Bibles worldwide.

Every three months or so, several times a day, Justin tirelessly smuggled a backbreaking load of Bibles across borders on foot. He’s had many opportunities to make a difference in the lives of believers who are hungry for the Word, as well as to see God miraculously open the way for him to get across borders under the noses of intimidating and suspicious border guards.

Without a doubt, Justin is an arrow. And while he has loving parents who are very supportive of his call to *the mission*, he’s like the many other young arrows in our own country who could always benefit from having more adoptive spiritual parents who are willing to invest prayerfully and financially in his world-changing ministry endeavors. He has ongoing travel expenses, not to mention the ministry can always use more Bibles and teaching materials. In fact, when you invest in someone like Justin, you’re taking the Word of God either into places it has never

been or places it's not allowed, becoming a spiritual parent to many in the underground, persecuted church. Can you imagine the radiant joy on all those faces at your party?

Shannon

Being an arrow doesn't come easily for Shannon Patrick. She grew up in a broken home with a single mom, and it wasn't until her first year at college that she got serious about her faith. At that time, she went on an overseas mission trip with an international youth missions organization (unnamed for security reasons), and some of the leaders told her that, as part of their discipleship program, they wanted her to consider becoming a trainer of other youth missionaries. "I folded my arms and said, 'I'll *never* do that,'" Shannon remembers.

A while later, back at college, she was brushing her teeth one night when God clearly said, "You're going to be a missionary trainer."

"No, I won't do it! That's too scary," Shannon argued. But a few months later, God won, and Shannon attended a seven-month program in Germany. Part of her training included going into a Muslim country for two months to "teach English." This was a great experience for Shannon, but still she wrestled constantly with feelings of fear and inadequacy.

"For some of the kids it's no big deal to do this kind of work. But for me, it's a *big deal* because I feel totally under-qualified." By being faithful to His call, Shannon discovered that during these stretching times, God becomes her adequacy. Once when she had to find a creative and covert way to present the Gospel story to Muslim children, she asked God to help her. That day He gave her an awesome version of the Gospel story about a Prince and a King that the kids were totally into. "When I began to narrate, suddenly God's peace came into the room and settled on the kids. You could feel it. It was really neat."

After her seven months in training, Shannon is now ready for training missionaries, which will include leading her own outreaches to foreign

countries. But at times she still struggles with trusting God with the unknown of her future. “It’s really frightening. Even though God knows what’s best for me, and my life is not my own anymore, *I’m scared*. There are a lot of challenges that I’ll have to face. I think I know in my heart what God’s character is like, but I still struggle with questions like, *Lord, what are You going to make me go through?*”⁷

Some of Shannon’s family members think she should forget about missions for now and focus on finishing college. With the fear bearing down on her, Shannon is often tempted to agree. “I worry about the practical things like, *what am I going to do about money?*”

For now, Shannon has decided to put off college to pursue *the mission*, training young missionaries to span the globe. “I’m working on living in the present moment and trusting God with the rest, but there’s still that fear. It takes practice to overcome. It would be so much easier for me to go to college and start pursuing a normal life where I could start earning money and be comfortable. But I really can’t do anything else. I don’t want to miss out on what God has for me.”

Imagine how many lives you could reach by investing in an arrow like Shannon, who is equipping young people to go to countries worldwide to spread the Gospel.

Just like all these arrows beyond, as long as your kids live in your home, every day of their lives can and should be a mission-training day. Every Christian home in America is a potential Bible college.

Is the investment worth it? Let the kids’ lives speak for themselves. When you invest in mission experiences for your own kids, you give them a heart etched with concern for *the mission*. When you invest in a person like Jennie, you also invest in the eight kids she’s raising to continue the process of hope. When you invest in someone like Lily, you also invest in the fifty-seven plus kids who will carry the Good News back to their families and villages. When you invest in someone like Justin, you’re taking the Word of God into places it’s desperately needed, bringing light and

hope to many in the underground, persecuted church. When you invest in someone like Shannon, you're helping train missionaries to reach over a hundred different countries.

Maybe you've never thought about investing in kids outside your own home. But think of it this way. Investing in mission-minded young people means becoming a spiritual parent, leaving a world-changing legacy for those you've never even met. And it's never too late to get started making a huge difference. You and your family can personally play a role in impacting lives in villages, cities, and even countries, whether or not any of you ever set foot there. Now that is truly multiplication at its best.

Let the party begin!

CHAPTER 7



MOBILIZE BOWS

Sodom's sins were pride, laziness, and gluttony, while the poor and needy suffered outside her door.

—Ezekiel 16:49

Only during the few years of this life are we given the privilege of serving each other and Christ. We shall have heaven forever, but only a short time for service here, and therefore we must not waste the opportunity.

—Sadhu Sundar Singh

There was a certain rich man going on a lengthy business trip. Being a compassionate sort, he called together his estate caretakers and gave them each some money to invest in helping the poor while he was gone, namely orphaned kids, who were near and dear to his heart.

To his personal bookkeeper, he gave the means to financially help ten children. To his housekeeper, he gave the means to help five children. And to his gardener, who was not known for managing money well, which is

why he wasn't a bookkeeper, he still gave plenty to help take care of at least one needy child.

When he returned home a long while later, he asked the bookkeeper what happened. "Well, you gave me enough to help ten children. I invested part of the money in a mutual fund and earned so much, I had enough left over after helping ten children to buy myself a really nice, new, high-speed water-ski boat. But I just didn't feel right using the money on myself like that. I mean, what good is a ski boat when others aren't even able to eat? So I used the money to help ten more kids get rescued from a poverty-stricken life, providing plenty of money to raise them in Christ-centered homes."

"Well done! I am so proud of you, because you did exactly what I would have done with my money. You were a faithful money manager, so now I know I can trust you. I will give you even more ways you can help save poor and needy children, because of my great love for them. They're going to change the world, you know. Just for this, I guarantee you will get a huge year-end bonus! Please, I insist you take a nice, paid vacation for all your hard work and faithfulness."

Next he turned to the housekeeper. "So what happened to the money I gave you?"

"Sir, you gave me enough to help five children, which I did right away. I also got a part-time job while you were gone for some extra spending money. I worked long enough to save the money to buy a plasma flat screen TV that I've been eyeing down at CHEAPCO. But when I thought about the money you had given me for the children, and how so many more were still out there, I just couldn't bring myself to spend the money on myself so greedily, so I was able to help an additional five children get plenty of food and medical treatment, not to mention excellent Bible training!"

"Wow, that's amazing! I am so proud of you, because you did exactly what I would have done. Not only did you use my money wisely, but you also sacrificed your own time and energy to make a difference. You were a faithful money manager, so now I know I can trust you. I will give you even

more ways you can help the poor. You too will get a nice, fat bonus this year. Get ready; you'll have a hard time spending it all! Now, please, take your family on a relaxing vacation, my treat."

Finally the estate owner turned to his gardener. "So what happened with the money I gave you? I'll bet you really did something great with it, too, huh?"

"Well, uh, sort of. I know you have high standards and hate careless spending. You expect a lot from us, for sure. When I saw how many orphans needed help, I was overwhelmed. I'm only one person, after all. How could I make a difference, especially with how little money you gave me to spend? And even if I did give it to help a child, how could I be sure the child actually received it? I was worried about your money being mishandled and unaccounted for. Also, I was afraid I might disappoint you with how little I was able to do, especially compared to what the others were doing. I'm not that good with money—you know that already. Anyhow, I dug a hole in the back yard and kept your money nice and safe. Here it is, not a penny missing."

The estate owner was furious. "That's a terrible way to live! It's criminal to live so cautiously! If you knew I was expecting only the best from you, why did you choose to do less than nothing? The least you could have done would have been to give the money to a homeless shelter or a struggling single mother. You're fired! And I'll see to it you never get a job in this part of the country again."

"To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who are unfaithful, even what little they have will be taken away" (Matthew 25:29).

Faithful Servants?

Right now, in countries all over the world, through dozens of ministries, there are many thousands of children being gathered from hopeless, purposeless lives and being shaped into arrows. These ministries have

plenty of broken branches to gather, and they've got the archers, who are the workers, in place to train and send the fully formed arrows.

But what about the bows?

The bows are the resources—especially the financial investments—that make it possible for this process to work. Without bows, arrows are completely useless. Without the financial means to be shaped and launched, there is little point in gathering. For too long, many of the bows have been broken, disabled, or hidden away.

What's the big deal if your family invests in other arrows in other parts of the world or not? Look around you. God has entrusted Americans, especially many Christians, with more wealth and resources than people in any other country. Not sure where I got this notion? I don't know . . . perhaps from the certain types of cars filling the parking lots of certain types of church buildings But I do know one thing: more money funneling into our eager little hands does not mean *more blessed*; it means *more responsibility*.

God did not provide abundantly for us so that we can use our resources selfishly. He did it so that we would be His money managers, using what He's given us faithfully for *the mission* of temple building and arrow production worldwide. Contributing to the work in other lives and countries is a crucial characteristic of being an arrow. Why? Because, given the opportunity, these young people in other countries will be able to reach places we could never reach alone. Without them, we cannot fulfill *the mission*. They can't do it without us; we can't do it without them.

Before I had my first real-life glimpse at the work being done on behalf of destitute children in other countries, and back when starving, homeless people probably remained unnoticed on my way out of the grocery store with my cart billowing over with food, I had four major mental obstacles to investing in *the mission* and suffering of others.

•• There are too many needs—I can't make a difference.

- The mission field is not for everyone.
- I don't know if my money is being used for the intended purpose.
- But wait, what about "The American Dream"?

Too many needs: Short of watching a Miss America Pageant, there was no ready answer I knew of for solving world hunger. The magnitude of the need was most discouraging when I began considering my part in alleviating suffering. I wondered what in the world my little \$30 a month, or any other seemingly insignificant donations to relief funds and charities, was going to do, really. In the grand scheme, I figured *nothing*. The person I feed today will just get hungry again tomorrow. One meal—or even a few—isn't going to change the course of a life. Besides, as soon as I feed one, there are a thousand lined up right behind. This is what I thought.

Then I had a sudden opportunity to go to Haiti, in November of 2006, which began the series of strange, life-changing events that soon led me to meet Papa in India. In Haiti, I met Willio, a man whose compassionate generosity belied the desperation of his environment—an environment that turns many innocent victims into hardened criminals bent on survival. The despair in Haiti is beyond comprehension, and it's certainly apparent in the widespread lawlessness and corruption.

Growing up with his grandparents in Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere, Willio suffered intensely from hunger and, at times, even thirst. This made concentrating in school practically impossible, and frequently he'd get lost in daydreams about food. The few times he ventured over to his dad's house to see if he might get some paper or pencils for school or maybe a bite to eat, his deadbeat dad, who sired 38 kids yet fathered none, chased him away, bellowing, "Go away! Don't ever come back here again!"

When thirsty, Willio often scooped stagnant water out of holes where rain had collected in the ground. In Willio's world, dysentery, malaria, yellow fever, tuberculosis, and AIDS are a part of everyday living—and dying.

A couple years back, Willio began taking in children off the street to protect them and to feed them when possible, which was only about one meal every three days. Finally, fearing starvation for his household, he went down to an “Internet Café” in his hometown, consisting of a couple of old computers hooked up to a generator, and typed the word “hope” into an Internet search engine. When this brought up an American-based ministry, Willio sent a desperate S.O.S., asking for food and assistance.

God did indeed send hope to Willio and his household through the ministry, and it soon became possible for him to begin taking in even more children off the streets. He now raises these kids with a heart to become spiritual leaders of Haiti. Willio believes it’s time for a change in Haiti, but he believes it must start with the children. With that in mind, he also opened a day school for poverty-stricken kids who have no other learning options. The enrollment is currently nearing 1,000 kids, and the school is a medium for kids to get in on daily Bible teaching and spiritual guidance. In his “spare time,” he pastors a fast-growing church, attended mostly by parents of the kids enrolled in his free school.

After meeting Willio and his kids, that “insignificant,” monthly donation suddenly turned into new life for one hopeless, living, breathing child with a name and a face. It turned into the potential of raising a future world-changer with an education and the love of God. If that one hopeless child were my child, would that monthly amount seem a little more significant?

After I returned from Haiti, I tried to put this concept into words. How could I explain to people that giving for even one child really could make a difference? Then I found the perfect words—the starfish story, by Loren Eiseley. Here’s the shortened, paraphrased version:

One day a man walked along the shore after a storm, and as he looked down the beach, he noticed a younger man, reaching down to the shore, picking up small objects, and throwing

them into the ocean. As he came close to the younger man, he inquired, “What are you doing?”

The young man replied, “Throwing starfish back into the ocean—before they die.”

The older gentleman said, “But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can’t possibly make a difference!”

At this, the young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water he responded, “It made a difference for that one.”¹

I, too, want to make a difference, but I don’t want to just feed stomachs. When I invest in suffering, I want to make sure I’m investing in hearts and souls as well. That’s where true eternal change comes about, and that’s what *the mission* is all about.

“I can’t afford to give—I’m already stretched to the max,” I used to console my conscience. Then I read how Jesus said that the measure of a person’s heart can be gauged by where his money is going (Matthew 6:21). If I’m honest with myself, I’ll admit it’s my *priorities*, not my *bank account*—no matter how puny—that keeps me from giving extravagantly to God’s work. I’ve watched myself on this. I’ll spend money on hobbies, clothes, vacations, recreation, beauty treatments, enough books to start my own library, silly things not even on my shopping list, infomercial products that are going to change my life forever—you know, all the necessities—and then say that I don’t have enough money for the offering plate or the missions fund on Sunday.

“As surely as the compass needle follows north,” says Randy Alcorn in his book, *The Treasure Principle*, “your heart will follow your treasure. Money leads; hearts follow. I’ve heard people say, ‘I want more of a heart for missions.’ I always respond, ‘Jesus tells you exactly how to get it. Put your money in missions—and in your church and the poor—and your heart will follow.’”²

Papa's son, Sam, told me some inspiring (and convicting) stories of people who have given money to the orphan ministry in recent years. One elderly woman lived on a small fixed income of Social Security. For fifteen years, she sent a dollar—one dollar—every month. Another couple in a similar situation mowed two lawns on weekends for more than twenty years to support one orphan.

One of Sam's recent favorites took place in a poor village in India on a Sunday evening. He'd spent all day traveling to over a dozen village churches to encourage them. It was well after dark, and he was exhausted after his last meeting, when an elderly village woman approached him with her grandson, asking Sam to pray for the boy. After he prayed, the woman took his hand and placed seven rupees (about fifteen cents) in it. "This is all I have to give to you. Thank you for praying for my grandson."

The local pastor told Sam that the woman didn't even have enough to feed her family and truly gave all she had. So moved with compassion by this woman's faith and generosity, Sam left her with seven hundred rupees to feed her family. "That was a defining moment in my life, a great moment in all my years of ministry, that this lady would give so much." Sam said it reminded him of a story of long ago.

"While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people putting their gifts into the collection box. Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two pennies. 'I assure you,' he said, 'this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has'" (Luke 21:1-4).

But can my meager offering really make a difference, we ask?

"Jesus soon saw a great crowd of people climbing the hill, looking for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, 'Philip, where can we buy bread to feed all these people?' He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do.

"Philip replied, 'It would take a small fortune to feed them!'

“Then Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up. ‘There’s a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?’” (John 6:5–9).

Don’t miss this. A little kid shows up on the crowded hillside with only a sack lunch. Jesus, miracle worker and omnipotent provider, asks Philip where they’re going to find enough food for over ten thousand people. Andrew pipes in, mentioning the boy’s lunch, which seems ludicrous. But this story is about much more than a bunch of hungry people. It’s about more than the financial fortune it would take to feed them all. This story is about what happens when God does the math.

The boy offered Jesus all he had. Jesus took it, small as it was, divided it, multiplied it, added up enough to fill everyone present, and then subtracted the remainder, which was way more than He started with—twelve baskets full of food. Now that’s *Jesus Math!* Realize that, as He fed stomachs, He also fed a deeper hunger. Along with serving barley loaves, He served the Bread of Life.

We may feel that the amount we have to offer the physically hungry world is miniscule. We may feel that the amount we have to offer our own spiritually hungry kids is not enough. We may show up with our little brown bag, feeling tired, stressed, pulled from all sides, inadequate for the job, already aware that we are not doing all that we could or should be doing. But still, we’re trying to do our best. We’re offering what we do have. And that’s where *Jesus Math* comes in. When we give Him what we do have, small as it is, we allow Him the opportunity to do the math for us. He takes the little we offer, asking for all we have to give upfront—our kids, our energy, our time, our money, our resources, our life—and then He makes a great, miraculous impact with it. And He gives much more back than we ever started with.

Papa says, “One of our greatest hindrances as parents is that we look to ourselves and ask, ‘What can I do? What difference can I make? This task is impossible.’ We forget that we are called on to do the impossible

with the help of the God of possibilities. By using whatever we have, we're able to accomplish great things because God will multiply our efforts and resources.

“When I came to the Lord and gave Him my life, I did not have any bread or fish in my hand,” says Papa. “But I began to distribute whatever He entrusted me with. Since then, I have received many baskets full of blessings in return. Instead of focusing on what you don't have or can't do, put all you do have into the hands of Jesus. Bring what you have to the Lord and trust Him to multiply it. Give thanks to God for the small things and use them for His Kingdom.”

Not for everyone: *The Great Commission is only for missionary-types. I've met those people, and they're an odd bunch. C'mon, you'd have to have lost your mind to go hang out with headhunters in a jungle (think about it). No sir, not for me. I rather like my head attached, thank you very much.*

As we've already discussed at length, *the mission is for everyone!* And before we clutch at our necks with fear, remember what we learned in the last chapter. You can go without your body. Yep, you can be on the mission field, even in the Amazon, without losing your mind—uh, your head, that is.

You can go with your money.

You can go with your talents.

You can go with your prayers.

You can go with your children.

Even if you can't go in person, your money and your talents are a great substitute. There are amazingly creative and talented people all over this world, volunteering on their own or through programs (or even working vocationally) to build up missionaries with their willingness and abilities—designing websites; writing stories and testimonies for church newsletters, websites, books, and magazines; working directly for international ministries from the States; knitting hats; gathering blankets, clothes, and shoes; sending personal hygiene care packages; training in language or cultural skills; doing

short-term missions trips for service or construction projects; and donating money from garage sales, bake sales, and other creative fundraisers. There are always many needs and just as many different ways to “go.”

If you and your family aren’t already doing anything world-impacting outside your home and community, sending your money is an excellent place to start. As you give, you begin to develop a love for and an interest in the people to whom you are giving. It breeds an increasing desire to get involved.

To obey Jesus’ commands of sharing the Good News and helping the orphan, the widow, and those in need, you have to deliberately find a way to go. “Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles” (James 1:27). I believe the reason God called it “pure and lasting” is because it’s the ultimate in selfless giving. These kinds of people could never repay us. When we give to them, we are not expecting anything in return, and we are never more like Jesus than when we give that selflessly.

If you can’t go with your body, go some other way. Yes, *the mission* is for you.

Misused money: It seems we hear all too often about money being mishandled. Even in ministries, there are many hands exchanging funding before it ever reaches its final destination. How can we know for sure that our money is going to the cause or person for which we sent it? Wouldn’t it be better to keep it than to find out later that it got wasted, squandered, or misused? Wouldn’t that be irresponsible giving?

There’s a balance here. We have to do our homework up front before we give to any organization. Research for yourself how donations are distributed and accounted for, and if it’s positively or negatively affecting the native community. Ask the ministry what percentage of your donation is used for administrative costs (a good goal is 20 percent or less). Find out if they allow you to visit the field for yourself to see how your money is being used. Beyond that, we are called to give. We can’t always police how

it's used. How do we know when we put money in the offering plate on Sunday that it's not being misused or over-administrated somehow? How can we be sure that the money we give anywhere is being used correctly? The answer is, we can't. Not 100 percent of the time. Is that any reason to throw up our hands and forget about it?

Here's the truth that can give us a dose of peace about giving: *Giving is more for us than for the cause.* God isn't pining away, helpless to do something without our money. He already owns all the cattle on a thousand hills—and all the money, too. Where it's needed, God is ultimately the Provider. He cares more about the heart that gives the money than about where it's going or how it's used. The motivation to give should be about being obedient to His command to give sacrificially, to willingly do our part to fulfill *the mission*, and to develop a heart of compassion for others. Our loyalty is to Jesus first, the cause second. The outcome of our giving is ultimately His responsibility.

While we can do our best to invest responsibly, we can't totally micromanage it or we would drive everyone crazy. Besides, if our giving depended on 100 percent effective use by totally honest people, we could never give. That's not a bankable reality anywhere in this broken world. We must look at the big picture. Look for the fruit of the ministry and then conclude whether they are handling the money wisely by the lives that are being changed.

In 1 Chronicles 29:16–17, David is offering a prayer of thanksgiving after watching all the people donate generously from their hearts and possessions to the construction of the Temple. “O Lord our God, even these materials that we have gathered to build a Temple to honor your holy name come from you! It all belongs to you! I know, my God, that you examine our hearts and rejoice when you find integrity there. *You know I have done all this with good motives*, and I have watched your people offer their gifts willingly and joyously (emphasis mine).”

Remember, as you seek to build Temples, God is looking at the motives of your heart more than your results. When you give, you are primarily giving back to God what He's already given to you. He's looking for people who will give generously to these construction projects currently going on worldwide. I truly believe that if you give with the best intentions and knowledge available at the time, God will never fault you for misused funds. He will still reward you. The people who mishandle the money will be held responsible. And I also believe, consistent with His nature, He will still redeem your gift somehow, providing for the cause for which you sent it.

If you begin giving to a ministry, an orphanage, a child, or even a specific building project, and at some point you want to know for sure how you're money is being used, the best way to find out is to visit the ministry you support. Go and see the work for yourself. When I visited the work being done in Haiti and India, the ministry efforts blew me away. I saw dozens of orphanages with thousands of children who are being taken care of, receiving an excellent education, including learning English (a vital skill in developing countries). These kids know their purpose. They talk about being arrows and changing their countries for Christ. It was mind-boggling to see such focus and commitment among those so young. After seeing the work, I wanted to give even more.

My best advice? "Do your best and leave the rest." Pray that your money will be used wisely and that God will see it through to accomplish the work for which it was sent.

The "American Dream": *I'm so glad God picked me to live this life in America.* While visiting poverty-stricken countries, this is what I thought. In fact, I still feel this way, but now for different reasons. I used to think, not so long ago, that all of the opportunities and relative wealth God gave me was to bless *me*—for me to use and enjoy. Sure, I felt bad about how others lived. But I was, oh, so thankful for the "luck of the draw" that landed me where I could enjoy the good life in America. I bought into the

thinking that He picked me to live in a country where I could shamelessly follow the American Dream. And that's pretty much what I did.

My husband and I used to drive two relatively nice cars, and we had a pretty nice start on a retirement account. We had health insurance, more than enough food, and a few years ago we built a big, beautiful home in the country on two pastoral acres. I dreamed of the financial security of paying off our home quickly, acquiring a vacation home someday, and being able to travel and hang out at beach resorts during extended vacations. Maybe throw in a nice golf membership during our retirement.

But in the back of my mind, a nagging question began to surface: *Why did God pick me to live this life and not a desperate, poverty-stricken one?* When I looked around at all the intense suffering and lost dreams in this world, where my brothers and sisters in Christ were born into circumstances beyond their control, I thought, *why isn't that me? And why doesn't somebody do something?*

And then one day I realized . . . *I am somebody.*

On his tour called "The Better Questions," Christian musician Todd Agnew told a story about going to India and seeing all the poverty and how it totally changed him. When he came back from the trip, he asked himself, "Why does God allow this kind of suffering?" After praying and studying the Bible on this topic, he came up with "the better question":

"Why do I allow suffering?"

People get all bent out of shape at God, wondering why He isn't solving world hunger, or giving destitute people homes to live in, or giving people clean water to drink, or keeping people free from curable diseases. The fact is, God's children—you and I—are His ambassadors on this earth. We are His hands, His feet, His heart, His food, and His money. You and I are possibly the only chance this world will ever get to actually see Jesus.

In the delightfully ruinous way that only God can do, He began to completely change my husband's and my thinking about our earthly possessions and our purpose on this earth. One of the penetrating verses He awakened in our hearts at that time was 1 John 3:16–18: "This is how

we've come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed his life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God's love? It disappears. *And you made it disappear.* My dear children, let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love" (MSG).

After my visit to Haiti in 2006, God threw out the challenge to my husband and me, giving us the opportunity to practice real love in a crazy and extravagant manner. We sensed His leading us to sell our newly finished home in order to build an orphanage where Willio could take in even more kids, as well as feed and clothe them properly.

Excuse the overstatement, but this was no small challenge. Aside from being the "American Dream" girl, I have this thing with money. When I say "thing," it's like this. I'm apt to balk when my husband wants to spend \$15 on a new rice cooker because the one we bought nine years ago at a garage sale still works. I thrive on the financial security of a chubby savings account, and I love the sanctuary of my own home. Now God was asking us to give up our life's savings in order to save lives in Haiti. When He made it clear that this is what He wanted us to do, the willingness came unexpectedly easy because He had been laying the foundation in our hearts for months, preparing us for that step. Selling our house in 2007 and using most of the equity for orphans has been one of the most amazing, rewarding, and wonderful experiences of our lives, offering our very best to God for the very "least of these" in a way that truly cost us something.

Since that time, we've also gotten more serious about investing in arrows with monthly support. We now help support eight different people of all ages, each in different ministries around the globe. It is so exciting to get their monthly updates, letting us know how our financial assistance is changing lives on four continents. In recent years, we've also developed the practice of investing in teens we know who are going on mission trips. I love

hearing about how God uses those trips to nudge them into lifetime service for the Kingdom!

Lest you misunderstand, this is not a guilt-induced message, imploring you to go out, sell all your earthly possessions, take a vow of poverty, and disappear in a secluded monastery. Although, if you're like me, some days, under the pressure of maintaining my inbox, that sounds pretty tempting. I fully understand that God has not called everyone to sell off the farm like we did, nor would it be wise in most cases for a developing family. But this is the part God asked us to play, based on our circumstances and His will for us. And even with that, we still own a nice car, and we're still totting enough household belongings to deck out a small country. I certainly wouldn't turn down a beach vacation under the right circumstances. But just the same, God is going to ask your family to do your part somehow, just like He did with us . . . if you are listening.

Start with One

I recently read some statistics that tell me that we're not "getting" this in American Christianity—that more blessed means more responsibility. At least 85 percent of all church activities and funds are directed toward the internal operations of the congregation, such as staff salaries, utility expenses, and Sunday school materials.³ Add building funds to that, and you can see why it's reported that the average amount of money going overseas from American churches is only two percent.⁴ What's wrong with this picture? The Church of the richest country in the world spending two percent on *the mission*! Sadly, I believe the state of church giving is only a reflection of where our hearts are individually.

God did not give me this financial blessing to keep for myself. He gave it to me because He trusts me to use it for furthering His Kingdom. He trusts that I will take my small lunch and let Him use it to feed multitudes of hungry hearts and stomachs. He's very clear about failure to use His money for its intended purposes in James 5: "This treasure you have

accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the day of judgment. For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The wages you held back cry out against you. The cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty” (verses 3b–4).

This earth is not our home. It’s more like a stay in a temporary hotel room. Why would we invest a ton of money into something that we’re not going to stay in permanently—something that’s really not ours to keep? But when we invest in *the mission*—when we invest in shaping and sending arrows—then we begin to lavishly decorate our future lasting home.

How many of us, if we’re honest, could find the money to make a difference for at least one? If we all helped just one, it would add up enough to make the world a better and less hostile place—and practically teeming with arrows. But many of us are donning our cozy PJs and slippers, relaxing in our comfy recliners in front of our cable TV, snacking on chips, sipping a nice cold glass of clean water, and waiting for God to do something.

Team Effort

As I implore you to get your family started investing in *the mission*, some of you might find Papa’s story so inspiring that you only want to support Papa’s ministry. Nothing could be further from Papa’s heart. I believe his God-given vision of one million arrows was given to benefit all children-shaping ministries—including the ones going on in American homes right now. This vision has to be a team effort if we are ever going to complete *the mission*.

Think about it this way. Papa has a lot of arrows being shaped in India through Hopegivers International, but what about Indonesia? Warm Blankets has arrow-shaping going on in Indonesia. But what about Africa? Kids Alive and Vision Trust have arrows being shaped in Africa. But what about eastern Asia? God’s Kids and World Orphans are working there (for a more comprehensive list of specialized orphan ministries, see the resources section).

Another consideration is that different ministries have different needs they minister to, and they are all important. Some feed, some train in lucrative professions, some sharpen for the mission field, some rescue from human trafficking regions, and some fight for justice in countries of oppression. So you see, we can't cover the bases alone—we need to work together. In order for *one million arrows* to become a worldwide reality, we must diversify through different ministries. We must all pray about where God wants us to invest our resources and what ministries fit our family's gifts, desires, etc. But we must all work together to do something.

It's important for you to know that when you invest in kids being raised in most arrow-type ministries (as opposed to primarily humanitarian), you are not usually given the opportunity to correspond directly with a child. There are a couple great reasons for this. Children growing up as arrows have a serious, focused purpose on this earth. It's not practical for an arrow to get distracted (or ruined) by the American lifestyle—a lifestyle that can't help but be communicated through letters, gifts, and pictures. The money received is applied adequately and appropriately to their needs within the scope of their culture. Besides, you can usually get updates from the ministry or the ministry's website about the child(ren) or orphanage you sponsor, and in many cases, you can visit that orphanage. Also understand that in most of the orphanage-type ministries, your money is not supporting only one child, but going for the good of all the children in the home. Anything less would be unfair, not to mention impossible.

Some people might not like the lack of personal interaction. But I've thought about how communicating with the child I'm supporting might seem good for me, but what about for the child? Is it really best for him or her? What if I'm interacting with "my child," and something happens where I can no longer send support? Wouldn't he or she feel rejected? Even though I enjoyed the personal relationship for a time, I can walk away unscathed, but what effects will be left for that child to deal with?

Also, it's important to remember that most arrow-ministry orphanages are like true homes. They are not sterile, loveless environments, harboring

emotionally bankrupt kids. They are functioning, loving families, where future arrows enjoy belonging and positive attention. They don't need a new family; they need financial help to pursue *the mission*.

Besides individual sponsorship, I think one of the best ways to get really connected with a ministry and to see how responsibly your money is being used is to get your church, ministry, or group to “adopt an arrow-shaping orphanage.” Most ministries would welcome this. Then your group can get involved in a long-term partnership with a specific home or ministry. You'd be amazed at how little money it takes to feed and clothe the kids, and perhaps you could also host special fundraisers for building projects and larger expenses. You can get regular, detailed updates from the orphanage and maybe even schedule annual visits to the orphanage through your church or ministry. Whether it's through financial assistance, prayer, or something else, everybody can get involved and do something to help out with their unique gifts and abilities.

You Can Make a Difference!

In the 1990s, Papa had a chance to visit with Bill Bright, the Campus Crusade Founder who had made Papa the offer to work for him out of Bible college and then supported him with \$25 a month for housing. By that time, Papa's church planting ministry had spread to other Asian countries and had multiplied in India to about eight thousand churches and more than three thousand orphans. Dr. Bright shook his head and said, “Thomas, if I knew that my \$25 a month could do this much, I would have invested most of my money in this work. I praise God for letting me help you get started in 1960.”

In America, we've been blessed beyond measure in ways that other countries cannot imagine. Why has God given us such prosperity and opportunity? We have the chance to use our God-given resources to gather, sharpen, and launch arrows beyond, and to teach our children to do the same. There are always more children who are awaiting their chance to become arrows in parts of the world where we cannot reach.

“But, young man,” we respond. “Do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach, and there are starfish all along every mile? I can’t possibly make a difference!”

But you can! With returns according to the heavenly accounting system (described in Matthew 19:29) of multiplying whatever you give by 100 times, no matter how much or how little you and your family have to offer for sending arrows beyond, *you can make a difference*. Our world is full of orphans who need spiritual parenting, and it starts with just one. It’s time to take our bows out of hiding, mend them, and join the workers on the field who are faithfully training children.

There’s no lunch too small, no bank account too depleted, that God can’t use it to touch multitudes, if we only have willing hearts. Will you make a difference for just one?