

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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Author's note: This book contains extensive author interviews during 2007–2008, both nationally and internationally. All quotes, unless otherwise referenced, are taken directly from those interviews.

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Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN 13: 978-1-60615-011-5

ISBN 10: 1-60615-011-1

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2009924987

*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.*