

# WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILDREN BECOME BROKEN ARROWS



An excerpt from *Arrows Make  
Terrible Crowns*

BY JANET MYLIN

## CHAPTER 3

# My Sad Crown

I had read it lots of times.

*Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.*

PSALM 127:4-5

Okay. So children are like arrows. That's nice.

The words of this Psalm weren't new or even unexpected. I found myself reading that Psalm for no particular reason, other than getting some of God's Word into my brain.

And then He interrupted me. God whispered a statement that would make this familiar scripture highly disruptive to my everyday life.

**"Janet, arrows make *terrible* crowns."**

What? I'm wearing my children like a crown for *myself*?

I've seen this over and over when I look at myself and other moms, an unhealthy mindset of "my child's behavior is the source of my honor." If my child isn't "doing well," I can't feel good about myself. This can leave us running around life constantly breaking our arrows, gluing them and forming them into some sort of crown for ourselves.

But arrows make terrible crowns.

Maybe it would look cool at first glance, but the fact remains: Those arrows were meant for something else.

This begs the question, what *are* arrows good for?

When I asked a group of teenagers (aka: "arrows") this question, one girl very matter-of-factly said, "Arrows are for stabbing someone from a distance." Hmm. Yep. That pretty much sums it up.

In the context of scripture, the "someone" these arrows are meant to "stab from a distance" is the Enemy of our souls. Satan, to be specific, and all of his works and workers.

If you're not familiar with Ephesians 6:12, you might want to cozy up to it a little bit. It will sustain you, especially when you think your *child* is the enemy of your soul, not the Devil. Here's what it says:

*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

EPHESIANS 6:12

Our children, when launched out into the world, are meant to do damage to the kingdom of darkness.

They are...

Lie busters

Darkness illuminators

Confusion clarifiers

Truth speakers

Freedom fighters

And we can be very afraid to let that happen. Well, at least I can. What about you?

Stop for a minute and answer this question:

***What is it about launching your children out into the world that scares you?***

I thought it was easier to just *not* launch them out - to save them (and me) from pain.

## CHAPTER 4

# Broken Arrows

Let's go over two specific ways we can use our arrows incorrectly.

### **We break our arrows.**

As we've already discussed, we can take our arrows, break them and keep them as a crown for ourselves. How does that look in real life? Well, for me on a real regular basis, it would look like this:

*You need to clean your room.*

*You call this a clean room? Do it better.*

*There's still stuff under your bed. Do you think I'm stupid and can't see it?*

*Why can't you put your pants away? I've made this as easy as possible for you and you STILL can't seem to do it!*

*Forget it. Just leave. I'll clean your room because I can't handle it looking like this. I have all this other stuff to do but now I have to clean your room. This is ridiculous.*

The child is in tears and I'm storming through the room in a tirade of contempt - hating myself and

relishing the control all at the same time.

Honestly, my old companion Shame is knocking on my door after writing that. I'm embarrassed to even share it.

**I would break the child's freedom to do things imperfectly in order to make myself feel better. Broken arrow. Ugly crown.**

Another example of breaking the arrow might go something like this:

You have a high schooler who's had a desire to go to other countries since she came out of the womb. An opportunity comes up for her to go to a country in Africa for a week with people you know and trust.

*But.*

What if something happens to her? What if she gets sick? What if she gets lost? What if the plane crashes? What if terrorists attack? What if, what if, what if... all of them landing on "I couldn't deal with that."

And you say “No.” Not out of wisdom. Not because the Lord directed you. But out of fear.

Arrow broken. A crown of safety for yourself.

The reason we do this is because we have a hard time trusting God with our children. It's hard to believe He will show up for our kids in their struggle. Or at least we think we'd do a better job of taking care of them.

I truly believe one definition of Anxiety is imagining a future that is absent of God's grace and love. There may be some exceptions to this, but I haven't found one in my own life yet. If I'm breaking my arrows out of fear, it's because I really don't believe God is FOR them or WITH them - not now and not in the future.

What if instead of breaking the arrows to become our adornment, we focus on firmly planting ourselves in Christ SO THAT our identity becomes the vehicle we use to launch them out into the world? What if, instead of breaking our arrows, we launch our kids strategically THROUGH our own unshakeable identity in Christ?



I am convinced this is how the Proverbs 31 woman can laugh without fear of the future in verse 25. It's because of the piece before it: *She is clothed with strength and dignity.* A woman clothed in strength and dignity isn't walking around in insecurity and fear.

***Did your parents or guardians fearlessly launch you out into the world? If so, how?***

***What are some areas in which you felt broken by your parents?*** For instance, were you a natural artist, but your parents pushed you towards a non-creative field? Did you have dreams, but your parents' negativity paralyzed you?

***If you have children, in what ways are you tempted to break your own arrows, either out of fear or out of control?***

Take a few minutes now, or make time later, and talk this through with the Lord. Even if you can only focus on it for three minutes, do it. It's not about the time as much as it's about your heart. Do you have a trusted friend or mentor who can hear the answers to those questions without judging you? Set a time to do just that.

## CHAPTER 5

# Rejected Arrows

**We shoot the arrows away as a defense mechanism.**

This is my personal go-to.

There are times when I've needed to separate myself from my kids in order to cool down or, quite frankly, not hit them out of anger, either with my hands or my words.

Maybe you've done this, too.

*Take a deep breath.*

*Talk yourself down from the ledge.*

*Pray.*

*Get your pulse rate down.*

*Look at the situation with the eyes of a cool-headed adult, not a crazy woman who suddenly decides she hates everything and everyone forever.*

That always seems to be a wise decision, although, admittedly, I've often chosen to just go with my raging emotions instead of taking a minute to get my cool back. Grace is a beautiful thing.

But sometimes, I would frantically separate my kids from me in order to just not have to deal with them, help them, talk to them, focus on me, whatever. I'm not talking about getting some healthy "me time." I'm talking about getting them out of your face in order to not have to deal with them at a time when you know they need you.

This is what I would do:

I would grab that arrow, stick it in my bow and just shoot it away from me. It didn't really matter where it landed. *I just needed the arrow to go away.*

To their room.

To a babysitter.

To the TV.

To anywhere but here.

I've found when I disconnect myself emotionally, even if the kids are right in front of me, it's the same thing as shooting them away from me. In both instances, I am removing their right to be in my space.

I've heard it said the moments you want to disconnect from your kids the most are the very moments you need to pull them in close.

*Why is that so hard sometimes?*

After talking to friends, and from my own experience, it seems how we were raised has a ton to do with it. I've composed a list of some good questions to guide you as you think through this. I use your mom in the questions, but feel free to apply it to your dad, caregiver, a coach, a teacher or guardian.

***When you did something wrong or annoying, how did your mom respond?***

***Does she still operate in that way?***

*How do you think that has affected the way you act and react with your kids?*

Here's something else I have seen.

**Sometimes what looks like shooting our arrows away, isn't that at all.**

I've seen friends who have particularly difficult situations with their older children get to a point of letting them go. It's not an act of exasperation, but more of an intentional "giving them over" to figure out the potential pain of their trajectory.

Psalm 81:10 says, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Every parent can relate to this plea, can't we? If they would just listen to us, we could save them from so much pain. But Israel wouldn't listen and they didn't want God around. Verse 12 tells us God "...gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels."

My friends who've had to do this released their children in a similar way, trusting that their child would be drawn back into the Father's arms, and, hopefully, their arms as well. I don't see this as shooting their kids out into dark places. I see it more as an act of tucking their arrow back into the quiver under a covering of intercession and trust in God. They didn't shoot their children out anywhere. They chose to pour themselves into prayer and trust.

## CHAPTER 6

# Redeemed Arrows

Don't be discouraged. No matter what you're feeling right now, don't give up. No matter how many connections you've made between your current life and your past life, it's not too late.

The devil's job isn't that hard. Truly, all he has to do sometimes is plant the seed of a tiny lie in my mind. And then I take the seed and nurture it until it becomes a huge debilitating force in my life.

Do you know what this does? It accomplishes one of the enemy's primary goals for humans: It paralyzes me.

If he can't kill me, he will do everything he can to stop me from doing anything good.

It makes me think about Job in the Bible.

I don't understand the ins and outs of this story, but it begins with a conversation between God and Satan. Satan tells God that he's been "roaming throughout the earth."



Let's pause there for a second because that reminds me of another verse. 1 Peter 5:8 says: "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

It is safe to say that when Satan told God he's been roaming the earth, Satan was looking for someone to devour.

So God gives him someone.

*WHAT?!?*

*Have you considered my servant Job? There is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil.*

JOB 1:8

After a second encounter, God tells Satan he can do anything he wants to Job, except he can't take Job's life (Job 2:6).

As the story goes, Job literally has everything taken from him. All of his wealth, his children, his health. His wife looks at him and encourages him

to just give up on everything. Give up on God and everything (Job 2:9).

Pause for a moment. Are you in a similar mindset right now? Do you find yourself at a crossroads of “Give up” and “Press on”?

***What helps you persevere in the tasks God has placed in front of you?***

Job lost almost *everything*. His life looked like a wasteland of hopelessness from the onlooker’s point of view. It seemed impossible that he wouldn’t die alone, poor and discouraged.

After Elihu comes on the scene in chapter 32 and rebukes Job and his three friends who were not

pointing him towards hope in the Lord, things shift. Because Job and God had a pretty lengthy discussion. Rather, God spoke truth and Job mostly listened and repented.

What did Job's repentance and confession produce?

*And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job  
more than his beginning.*

JOB 42:12

I know we're mostly talking about motherhood here, but think of any area of your life in which you feel fruitless or useless. Repent of any specific thing the Spirit brings to your mind. Then ask God to bless your latter days even more than your beginning days.

***Here's some space for you to write or draw that out.***

In the name of Jesus, let's believe God has the power to transform a life so much that our latter days are even greater than our beginning days! It is not too late for the Lord to instruct you in the ways of a powerful, warrior, archer mother. Just humbly submit yourself to His teaching and pursue what He places in front of you.

In speaking with a group of moms I love and adore, one of them expressed with raw honesty the negative narrative she speaks over herself as a mother. Her words conveyed a sense of **"I don't see how I could ever change. How could I ever get better?"**

It made me think.

I don't believe it's true. Not that I don't believe her struggle is real and sometimes debilitating. But I don't believe she is truly hopeless, as if there's nothing more for her. Do you know why? Because I know she pursues God. When she's able, she dives into scripture and chews on it like it's her job.

*Because she believes there's more.*

That's why we pursue wholeness, intimacy with God, and His voice. If we didn't believe there was

more than what we're currently experiencing, there wouldn't be much of a reason to nurture our relationship with God. As followers of Christ, carriers of the precious Holy Spirit, we are always drawn towards more. Eternity is set in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We are continually, gloriously haunted by a draw towards more.

If we're in a dry, hard place, we pursue God because we know there's more. We know God provides the nourishment and growth we need. He is the place of lasting change and wholeness.

Let's pray this prayer of David:

*O God, you are my God;  
earnestly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you;  
my flesh faints for you,  
as in a dry and weary land  
where there is no water.*

PSALM 63:1

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