

Build the Home With the Lord

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[0:00] Vacations are a great time to reflect on your life. Most of our lives, most of our time we spend working in our lives,! But vacations give us an opportunity to work on our lives.

They provide space to examine what we could do better, what we could change. And in ancient Israel, going up to the temple three times a year would have been a vacation of sorts.

It would have been sort of like those family conferences that we used to have 10 or 15 years ago. It would give them a space, an opportunity to look at their lives, to examine them.

And so I think it's natural then for us to find Psalm 127 in these songs of ascent. Because it's a reflection, it's an examination, it's a thinking over work and family.

The stuff of life. So if you could please turn there to Psalm 127 and listen as I read it.

[1:11] Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.

In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat, for he grants sleep to those he loves. Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him.

Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.

Psalm 127 gives us a chance to examine our lives, our work, our family lives. To ask how we're doing at this work of family.

And so using Psalm 127 to examine ourselves, in the first two verses, we ask a question, do I desperately need God to work in my family, in my life, in my endeavors?

[2:22] Do I desperately need God to work in my family, my life, in my endeavors? As you look at the first two verses, you can see that you do desperately need God.

He's a must. You can't do without Him. Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.

In vain you rise up early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat. Notice these people aren't doing nothing. They are working. They are building. They are watching. They are getting up early.

They are going to bed late. They are not lazy. They're toiling. And the problem is not a lack of labor. The problem is a lack of the Lord.

He's missing. Or if he's missing, then it's vanity. If he's not building with you, if he's not watching over the city with you, if he's not parenting, helping you in your parenting, in your family, in your business efforts, if he's not with you, then your work is in vain.

[3:30] Solomon says it three times. Vain. Vain. Vain. He's saying no amount of work, no amount of effort, no amount of planning can make up for the Lord's absence.

You can have as much of those things as you want, but without the Lord, those things are everything as vanity. That's reality. That is reality. Psalm 127 then is asking us, do you live like that? Do you believe that? Do you examine yourself? Do you desperately need God to be at work in your life? Do you see it that way? Are you thinking that way?

Because unless the Lord builds the house, the laborers build in vain. The principle can be applied to every human effort, every human endeavor. Benjamin Franklin was, he stood up at the beginning of the Constitutional Congress.

That was the group of men that wrote the Constitution for our nation. And in that body of men, he stood up. And this is what he said. I have lived for a long time.

[4:43] He was 81 years old at that time. And the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth that God governs in the affairs of men.

And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?

We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. Therefore, I beg leave to move that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business.

Every human effort, brothers and sisters, including governance, is vain without God. But I want to think about that true principle that's true of all of our work, of every human effort, and think about it in one specific area because I think this is probably the area that Solomon most has in mind that he has a special concern for in this psalm, and that's parenting.

Because moms and dads, parenting is building, isn't it? Parenting is building a home. Parenting means watching. But without God, all of your building, all of your watching, in your family, will be in vain if it's without God's help.

[6:20] That's reality. And if that is reality, then how we should be men, moms, and dads who pray. Who pray.

If no amount of human wisdom, no amount of human work, getting up early and staying up late, can make up for the absence of God, then moms and dads, we have to be moms and dads who pray. Benjamin Franklin was right. If these things are true, and they are true, then the logical outcome is that we should be praying and asking for God's help.

And so moms and dads, let me challenge you. Let me encourage you to begin, if you haven't, to keep at it, if you have, praying together for your children.

Reality is, all of your work without God is vain. So bring Him into your family. Bring Him into your work of parenting through prayer. It's not enough dads to go to work.

[7:22] It's not enough moms to go to work and work and work in the family and however you do. No amount of work can bring lasting, durable prosperity if God is missing.

But those who fear the Lord and who trust in Him, you see that in verse 2, He grants sleep to those He loves.

They're able to leave off their working. They're able to go to bed and rest because they know the one who watches over Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

And if His help is the determining factor, then we can rest because it's not all up to us. We can have peace. Now does that mean that we don't work?

I don't think we can draw that conclusion at all from this psalm. Solomon, the author of this psalm, according to the little title there, he wrote Psalm 127 and he also wrote Proverbs 31.

[8:24] Ladies. And that is a chapter of Proverbs that talks a lot about a woman working hard. Solomon wrote Psalm 127 and he also wrote most of the Proverbs.

And you know how full of hard work and diligent labor and planning the book of Proverbs is. And so, this is not against work, but this is against unbelieving work.

This is against the spirit of man that says, I can do it. Or it's all up to me. And so, I rise up early and I go to bed late not because I love God, but because I don't believe Him.

I don't believe He is the determining factor. So these first two verses are asking us a question. In your work, which you should be doing, are you believing God?

This is not against work, it's against unbelieving work. So moms, are you building? You should be. A wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.

[9:34] In your families, ladies, you are either building or tearing down. So are you building? Are you watching? Are you working? You better be. That's Psalm 127.

It says, trust God. Not only trust God, you desperately need Him. So we should be praying for His help. Now remember, we're examining ourselves from this text.

We're looking at our lives and our work and our work in our families. We want to work on our families, not just in them. Do you understand the difference?

we want to step back and we want to ask, how are we doing in this? So the first question is, do you desperately need God to be at work?

In one sense, the answer is, of course, yes. In another second sense, the question is, do I desperately need Him? Am I praying for His help? Now, the second question is this.

[10:35] So that was the first question. The second question is, is this, are you making arrows or are you just gathering sticks? And you'll see what that means. Are you making arrows or are you gathering sticks?

Verse 3 says, children are an inheritance, a heritage from God and a reward. Now, you know what an inheritance is? Something that you receive from your parents.

Something that you didn't work for, but they give to you. So children are an inheritance, a reward from God. Now, if we're going to understand what Solomon is saying in this passage, in these verses, we need to look at it closely.

Is this saying that children, in general, always, are a gift and inheritance from the Lord? There's no doubt that in a certain sense that is absolutely true.

And I don't want to diminish that in the least. But I think, if we think about this more closely, if we look at it closely, you'll see that he has something more specific in mind than just children are a gift from God.

[11:42] And so are they always a gift? Always. In every situation. No matter how old they are.

No matter who they are. Can we always say that they are a gift from God? Like I said, I think in a general sense we can. But some of you, I can imagine, as you think about your children or one of your children, can say, well, it's hard thinking about them this way.

And sadly, you can't say, I am so glad that so and so is my son or my daughter because when I am faced with my enemies, they stand with me. They can stand with me and I'm not put to shame.

That's how the psalm ends. Perhaps, and rather, your children are a great deal of your sadness.

And maybe they are a shame to you. And you hate to say that, but if you're honest, that is the truth.

[12:49] And so I don't think Solomon is just talking about children in general in this psalm. I think he has a specific situation. He's envisioning a specific situation in mind when children then are such a blessing.

And this is what I think he's painting for us. These children were children that were born when the parents were young. That's what verse 4 says. And now, the parents are older.

And maybe these parents aren't so strong or able to defend themselves. Perhaps that's what he's picturing. They aren't so quick. They aren't able to take care of so much of their legal business.

And the difficult ins and outs. And the details of life. you know that it's easier for elderly people to be taken advantage of.

It's a sad peril of old age. But here is a father whose sons are sharp like arrows. Who are strong.

[13:56] Who are quick. And this dad has all he needs. He has a full quiver full. And so, when he stands in legal situations, that's verse 5, contending with my enemies at the gate.

At the gate was the place where you did legal transactions. So, you're contending with your enemies in the gate. You're in these legal situations. You're in some argument with your neighbor or perhaps your neighbor is taking advantage of you.

Or you are in danger somehow in your life. This father though, he's not alone. He has his sons or his daughters around him. And so, a man with godly, wise, strong sons or daughters who stand with him, who defend him when he is weak, when he is in danger, that man is a blessed man.

Those children are an inheritance from the Lord. That's a blessed man that won't be put to shame when he's contending with his enemies. And so, those kinds of sons are a heritage from the Lord.

And that's why I think we can't take sorry, I'm having such problems here. We can't take the psalm as a blanket statement on God's blessing on having lots of children.

[15:16] Some people have taken the psalm that way that this is just a blanket statement that God wants us to have as many children as we can. Blessed are the, you know, you want to have a quiver full.

Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. This psalm is descriptive. It is not prescriptive. This psalm is descriptive.

It is not prescriptive. It describes a certain blessed man. It doesn't prescribe what we should do. It's not saying God wants everyone to have as many children as they possibly can.

This psalm is not saying the sheer quantity of children is a blessing. This psalm is saying, no, when a man has a quiver full of wise, godly, sharp, strong sons or daughters, that is a blessing.

Those kinds of children are a gift from God. They're an inheritance. They come from Him. Listen to what Charles Spurgeon said, and I think he makes this point so well. When sons and daughters are arrows, it is well, it's good, to have a quiver full of them.

[16:27] But if they're only sticks, naughty and useless, the fewer of them the better. While those are blessed whose quiver is full, there's no reason to doubt that many are blessed who have no quiver at all.

For a quiet life may not need such a warlike weapon. Moreover, a quiver may be small and yet full, and then the blessing is obtained.

In any case, we may be sure that a man's life consists not of the abundance of children that he has. So, brothers and sisters, godly, wise, sharp, strong sons, children are a gift of God.

They're a blessing from Him. And so, how we should pray for children like that, for those kinds of children. that our children would become those kinds of children.

But on the other hand, can we expect, can we expect God to give without us working, without our careful, diligent, thoughtful, watchful labor?

[17:42] I don't think so. I don't think so. So, the question that I want to leave with you parents, and this is the question that I ask myself, is, am I raising children so that they will be like sharp arrows in the hands of a warrior, or am I just gathering sticks?

Am I making arrows, or am I just gathering sticks? So, moms and dads, think with me. What would, what would a grown son, a grown daughter, who was like a sharp arrow, what would they be like? What are we aiming for? What are we shooting for? Because while they are a gift from God, arrows need made. Arrows need polished. They need sharpened. And so, if we are in danger, if we're in a situation when we're contending against our enemies, and all I, and I reach for my quiver, and all I have is a bunch of sticks, having more of them won't help.

Having 13 sticks, or 8 sticks, or 1 stick, if they're dull, crooked twigs, that won't fire straight, then they won't be of any help to me. And so, I ask myself, what would it, what am I aiming for?

What kind of grown son, or daughter, would be like an arrow? So, if I were to go to court, or if my neighbor started to try to take advantage of me, what kind of son, or daughter, would I want standing with me, and helping me?

[19:13] Well, I would want someone who is wise. Someone who is wise in the fullest, in the full biblical sense of the word. Give me a son.

Give me daughters that are full of discretion. So, if I'm in this situation, and I go to court, we'll say, and my child, my son, or my daughter, now grown, they start acting like a guest on the Jerry Springer show, or something like that, I would be put to shame.

Wisdom. Wisdom. Parents, are you teaching your children wisdom? And I don't know any way of teaching them wisdom without the book of Proverbs.

So, are you teaching your children the book of Proverbs? It's for the young. It's written that they might be wise. Take advantage of that. Your aim should be to make arrows.

So, how do you do that? You teach them Proverbs. You pray, and you impress upon them wisdom. Now, what else would make a son or a daughter an arrow?

[20:20] What should I be aiming for? I would want them to know when to talk, and when to be quiet. I would want them to know how to handle money. Parents, are you teaching your children how God wants them to handle money?

The Bible is full of instruction. teaching them how it works. Teaching them the dangers and the opportunities that money gives you.

Money is all over life. So, make them sharp arrows. Teach them how to handle that. So, what kind of son or daughter would be like an arrow?

Well, one who is self-controlled, one who knew how to take work, who knew how to go to work and take initiative. Some young people, especially today, some young people, it doesn't seem they don't want to leave the basement quiver.

They want to stay. And when an arrow won't leave the quiver, the archer is to blame. So, children were meant to leave.

[21:32] They were meant to take initiative in their life. They were meant to make a life of their own, to work, to provide for themselves. And so, a basement son playing video games or watching movies all day will not be a blessing.

It wouldn't be a blessing from God on the day of trouble. Instead, they would put you to shame. But you give me sons and daughters who know how to work, who know how to carry themselves, who are full of discretion, who hate evil, who love what is good, who fear the Lord, who are living day by day in this word, then I'll be a blessed man.

I'll be a man who's ready to face my enemies, to stand against them. I could say so much more. But don't pillow your heads tonight without examining yourself from Psalm 127 and asking yourself these two questions.

Am I parenting with God? Am I trusting in Him? Am I seeking His favor and His help? No amount of you and your work can make up for His absence.

And that means you better be praying. And then secondly, are you making arrows? Are you gathering sticks? Sharp arrows are a gift from God.

[22:53] They're an inheritance, a heritage. And so we should seek them from His hand. We should pray for them, but sharp arrows are rarely, almost never given without diligent, watchful, thoughtful labors of moms and dads.

So what is the message of Psalm 127? Trust God, parents, and get to work. Let's pray. Amen. Heavenly Father, we do ask that You would give us children who are like sharp arrows in the hands of a warrior, who when they are older will be wise and godly and they will be a defense for us in our older age.

They will be a help to us and a blessing to us for our whole life. We do thank You for all of our children. We ask that You would please that You would please give us grace and diligence that we might put forth that needed effort of rising early and going to bed late if that is what it's called for in order to diligently impress Your Word upon our children to teach them, to mold them, not to be hands-off, not to be passive, not to just be gathering, but without making.

We pray, Lord, that You would please save our children. Help us to be godly parents. Help us to learn how to preach and teach the gospel to them, to teach them who they are and to teach them what You expect of them and help us to teach them the scriptures that are able to make them wise unto salvation.

Lord, but we seek all of these things from Your hands because we know that no amount of our work, no amount of our effort can make up for Your absence. So please bless our work.

[25:00] Bless our parents. Bless us in every effort and in every endeavor. As the men go off to work, I pray that they would see that they need the Lord's help at work.

And as moms raise children and are with their children, I pray that You would make them see that they need Your help in that.

Help us all to lean on You this week as we trust in You, as we pursue Your will and Your wisdom in our lives.

I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.