

“A Lasting Legacy”

Psalm 127

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As a pastor, every week when I prepare a message – I assure you know that before it is EVER preached outwardly to you or any group of people I am standing before, that message is always first preached to me...to my own heart.

God OFTEN uses the messages I am crafting to speak to me and sharpen me well before it's ever brought to you. I heard one preacher say it like this: He said, “sermon preparation is the crucible of his sanctification.”

I identify with that...and it especially rings true with a message like the one we are talking about today as it relates to building a godly home and raising godly children...having a genuine connection between parents and children.

This is a message that I approach with fear and trembling because with four kids of my own, I am a fellow journey man on this parenting deal and I feel like more times than not, I'm learning on the run! And my kids who are here in the service – it may be the first time they've amended a sermon ever!

Illus. Child-rearing - I kind of feel like the Ph.D student who was writing his dissertation on child-rearing: He titled the dissertation, “Proven, Effective, and Definitive Principles of Child-Rearing.”

He was single. A few years later, after he got married, he and his wife had their first child. And after their child's first year, he decided to take his dissertation off the bookshelf in his study. He picked it up, looked at the title, and, due to his rough first year as a parent, decided to retitl it to “Principles of Child-Rearing.”

A few years later, he and his wife had another child. After a while, he was studying in his office one day and he came across his dissertation again, took out his pen, and retitled it again to “Theories on Child-Rearing.”

A few more years later, after having another child, he retitled his dissertation one last time to: “Help me, I'm Dying!”

I appreciate that saying that goes something like this: “Before you're married you have a couple of great theories on parenting. Later, you have a couple of kids you have no great theories on parenting.”

And so, I approach this subject today readily admitting I am not an expert on this, but God's Word does speak to how we should build our home and raise our children and that's what I want us to talk about today.

I'm calling the message: **A Lasting Legacy**

I think recognizing our high school graduates earlier and acknowledging the fact that we are sending them out into their next phase of life – whatever that may be is a PERFECT picture of the reality of parenting.

I remember when I was graduating high school, my English teacher said to our class, when you walk across that stage to get your diploma, your parents aren't seeing you as an 18 year old -they are seeing that little first grader they raised and thinking back on your kindergarten graduation...and I've got to imagine that's true.

It's been said that the days are long, but the years are short and all the parents of kids who have left the house and grandparents said, "AMEN!"

Now, this is important. If there is anything we need to get right as Christians, this is it. We talked in our message last week on marriage about what it means to build a better marriage and how the home is the foundational building block of society.

Before God ever built a nation or established the Church, he first created the family. I put this image on the screen (**SHOW IMAGE** and talk through).

Now, part of the "companionship piece" is what I would call "parental companionship". That you are in this together as you raise a family. And let me just say this as we are getting started.

Like last week, I realize we have a lot of people represented here from different walks of life. We have single parents in the room that are doing the work of two – you are to be honored and I hope as a church, we are coming alongside you in an effective way to help serve you as you raise your child/children.

We have blended families that are represented here today, and I know there are complexities that go along with that. We have grandparents that are raising children. I always think about these things when writing a message.

As a pastor, I feel like I am often times walking a tight rope...and I want to be extremely sensitive especially when talking about issues that relate to the home.

So, as we get into the message today, whatever your background is and whatever place you are coming from, I believe God's Word is always the place to start and God will use his word to speak to exactly where you are.

I also understand that some of you have raised children and they are already out of the home. Some are living for Jesus, and some may not be, and maybe you carry some guilt around about what you could have done better or should have done better.

That's NOT what this message is about at all! I'm sure everyone would like a mulligan in some form or fashion when it comes to parenting, and I want to encourage you to lay any guilt, shame and regrets at the feet of Jesus.

I like what Pastor **Larry Osborne** wrote in his book, *Ten Dumb Things Smart Christians Believe*. Chapter Three is entitled "A Godly Home Guarantees Godly Kids".

He wrote: **"Every son and daughter of Adam is a born with a sin nature. Sometimes it gets the upper hand. When it does, it's not someone else's fault – not even Mom or Dad's."**

God is BIGGER than any of parental failures we've ever made and he loves our children more than we do. Take any burden you have for the would've's and could've's in life as it relates to building your home and raising your children and give them to Jesus.

And so, with all this being said, let's read our text and get going this morning:

Psalm 127:1-5 – "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand 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."

I love the psalms...and I especially love what we call the "Psalms of Ascent". There are 15 of them in scripture. Psalm 120-134, and all are written in order to prepare the heart of the worshipper to meet with God.

Three times a year, Jewish pilgrims would make their way to Jerusalem, to the Temple in order to celebrate and sacrifice and worship...and as they went, it's VERY important to understand this, they went as a family!

- There was no leaving the children back in the villages with a babysitter...
- There was no skipping out or just the father going on the family's behalf...

NO! When you went to Jerusalem...to the Temple to worship you went as God designed...as a family unit.

Illus. "Are we there yet" – In prepping for the message this week, we're getting ready to go to a family camp that we go to each year in CO. I'm thinking about their journey to Jerusalem and our journey to CO next week, and I just wonder how many Hebrew dads heard their children say while traveling on this journey, "Dad, are we there yet?".

Or how many got in some arguments on the way?! It was a train wreck on the way there but when they got there – "Fine...God bless you!"

You know it happened! How did they make this trip with no ipads or phone! Crazy, right?!

Now, this picture of families walking through life together...on their way to worship together...a mom and dad leading the way with children following closely behind - it gives us a starting point to where to begin the message and I want to outline this passage in asking two questions.

The first question is this: **Who is building your home?**

Now, on the surface, we may all immediately think that God is building our home. But I want us to step back and really do the hard work of exploring this question today: “Is God really building your home or do you just think or like to think that God is building your home?”

Let’s work this out. This Psalm is written by Solomon. The Bible tells us he was the wisest man to ever live. And he was in fact a builder. He built homes and gardens. Most impressive was the Temple he had constructed.

He knew something about building. And he writes here in (v. 1) that unless the Lord builds the “house” - the house in the ancient world included a person’s family...their reputation...their status in society.

I titled this message purposefully because you could really use the word “Legacy” here. Unless the Lord builds your legacy...your home...unless the Lord watches over the “city” – and in this context, Solomon is clearly zeroing in on the city of Jerusalem here.

What he is stating is, if God is NOT building your house and if he is NOT watching over the city than man’s efforts to do those things are futile and vain.

The word “vain” here mentioned three times in (v. 1-2) means “useless, empty, worthless”.

Now, if we zoom a little bit further out and build an interpretive bridge and apply this text to our own families and homes, we can say the exact same thing!

If God does not build our home...if he is not watching out over where we live – our efforts...our attempts to construct and build anything is vain...useless...worthless...it’s not going to hold up!

Illus. Dad – I’ve told you before that my dad is brick-mason and carpenter by trade. And so, I grew up watching him build things from the ground up.

Whether it was building a shed in our backyard or adding a patio onto the house...I saw him construct and build a concession stand for our high school baseball field. And I’ll be honest, I was really little to no help to him at all! The one thing I could do however was mix cement or bring him cinderblocks to him so he could lay them down.

And in all those years of helping my dad out, I did learn one thing about building...and that is this: The foundation is MOST important.

When we talk about God building the home, this is where it starts! With a foundation. And the foundation of a home that God builds is Jesus.

If you want to know whether or not God is building your home, first answer this question: Is the foundation of your home knowing Jesus as Lord and personally living that relationship out before one another? This is where it all starts!

I shared with you these verses last week, but it's good to repeat them. I share these verses in every wedding I ever perform.

Matt. 7:24-27 – “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

When homes and marriages and families fall apart, most of the time it's because they were not built on a solid foundation. And so, when the storms of life come as the inevitably do, the home falls...it breaks down.

You try to build your home on anything other than God and a personal relationship with him through his son, Jesus and you are building in vain! It's building on sand!

What we see in our culture today is a pulling away from the one who builds the family...the who originally designed what a home should be!

It's like the old Seinfeld episode where George wants to impress everyone and tell people he is an architect – that's kind of what we do with our homes...with our families.

We play like we are the architect! We think we know what's best...and maybe what we have done is let God lay the foundation...we know him and have trusted him, but then we take the blueprints and start building however/whatever we want on the foundation. Think about it!

- We build our home on our careers – and we deceive ourselves in that we are providing for our families, but the fact is we are never present with our families! There can't be a genuine connection if we are never there!
- We build our home on our children and their activities. We get them involved in everything under the sun and all the sudden church and a relationship with the Lord begins to take a backseat because we have games and camps and clinics on Sundays – I'm telling you it's a bad trade...

We can be involved in these things, but we can't build our homes on them...it's vain...it's useless! It's not going to work! It's sand!

And so, the question is, "Who is building your home?" Are you letting God build it? Are you letting God...the one who invented the family, construct your home?"

OR, are you calling the shots? This is the first step of building a home that will last...a legacy that will last, is trusting in Jesus as Lord (foundation) and then living that relationship out before one another.

We need God to build our family and we need him to defend our family. This is the second part of (v. 1). We won't stay here long:

Psalm 127:1b – "...Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain."

We let God build the home and family and we trust him to watch over our home and family. The words "watch over" here means to "guard or to protect". And we NEED God to guard and protect our homes and family.

Listen, it's no secret that the Enemy is after our homes. He knows that if he can destroy the home, he can bring collateral damage that can last for years. It's no surprise that the home is created in Genesis 2 and the serpent comes crawling in, in Genesis 3.

Satan has been after the home from day one. He wanted to destroy the marriage...he wanted to destroy Adam and Eve's children. The first children of the Bible resulted in a murder of one of them.

Write it down: Satan hates the family...he wants to steal, kill and destroy your home...your kids. And he'll do it in overt ways and he'll do it in subtle ways.

And parents, you know this...we can't always protect our children. We can try, but ultimately we have to trust the Lord and entrust our homes and children to him. I think this is what (v. 2) gets at:

Psalm 127:2 – "It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil for he gives to his beloved sleep."

It's this idea that we will spend ourselves trying to build our home and defend our families...and we do this by:

- rising early...
- going to bed late...
- working our hardest to get ahead...

And as a result, we "eat the bread of anxious toil". We worry...we're robbed of sleep!

And what's happening is, we're not trusting the Lord to build and defend - we're trying to do it alone...we think it's on us and what we need to do is invite the Lord in!

Steven Lawson in his commentary on this passage suggests that the word "Unless" here implies that God wants to join in the work of building your family and defending your family, but will only do so if invited.

Are you inviting the LORD to protect your marriage? To protect your family? To protect your children?

Unless he is keeping watch, we watch in vain because the Enemy is insidious and relentless, and the attacks come from all angles. We can't always be there...we need the Lord to keep watch!

For some of you, the greatest night sleep you will ever have is when you make the decision to give control of your life, and turn your family, and home over to God.

So, question number one: **Who is building your home?**

Here is question number two: **Who is raising your children?**

Psalm 127:3-5 – “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand 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.”

I hope you see your children as a reward from the Lord. Some of your Bible's translate that word, "heritage" there as "gift".

Children are a gift from the Lord! They may be born here below, but they are given from above...they are a blessing. The word "heritage" literally means "inheritance" - NOT that they will receive your inheritance...but that they ARE your inheritance!

Do your children know this mom and dad? Do they know they are a blessing from God? The only way they will is if you:

- Tell them they are a blessing!
- And treat them as a blessing!
- Put your hands on them and speak words of blessing over them (do it!)

However, you received your children – whether they were born to you...whether you adopted a child into your family...or fostering a child right now, that child is a gift...a blessing from God to your family and we should treat them as such!

Charles Spurgeon – “He gives children, not as a penalty nor as a burden, but as a favour...Where society is rightly ordered children are regarded, not as an encumbrance, but as an inheritance. And they are received, not with regret, but as a reward.”

Psalm 127 tells us what we are to do with our children...how we should see our children:

Psalm 127:4-5 - “Like arrows in the hand 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.”

Solomon here equates children to arrows! And we know three things about arrows. First: **Children must be Shaped.**

An arrow starts out as a little twig. It must be shaped and crafted. A stick has to be molded into an arrow. What a responsibility we have to shape our children!

This process takes an extraordinary amount of time...it takes patience...part of shaping our children is teaching our children. And in order to teach them, we have to spend time with them!

Illus. “Be There” – Always asking fathers that are ahead of me in this game for wisdom and advice. I think the best I have been given to date are two words: “Be There”.

We **MUST** spend time with our children! I heard a long time ago that children spell love: T.I.M.E. – and it’s true!

According to Jewish tradition, Hebrew families would recite this Psalm over their newborn children. I love that idea of getting God’s word into the hearts and minds of our children, even when they are young!

Illus. “You are going to change the world/You are driving me crazy.”

When God gives Moses the Law, the fifth commandment given...the first of the horizontal relationships, has to do with the family! “Honor your father and your mother”.

That’s Deut. chapter 5! What’s Deut. 6? It’s the Shema! We’re talking about shaping our children. Listen to how we are to do it!

Deut. 6:4-9 – “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

What was God saying to the people? Shape your children! Talk about the Lord and what he has done every chance you get! Practically, on the way to school, tell them what you are learning in your time alone.

Illus. art - Let them see reminders of his goodness in your home (2 Tim. 4:7)...answer their questions. Saturate your home with God's Word and recount his faithfulness over and over again.

Part of the shaping process involves disciplining our children and teaching them what the word "NO" means. Giving them proper boundaries. The shapening process is a sharpening process, but it has to take place in the context of relationship!

Josh McDowell – “Rules without relationship leads to relational disconnect, which prompts rebellion.”

Mom, dad, this is OUR role...it is OUR responsibility to shape and teach our children! We will disciple our children OR their friends and Google will!

Listen, we have an incredible children's ministry...I believe one of the best in the country! We have a wonderful student ministry...I believe one of the best in the country! The programs and events we pull off are incredible...and they make a huge impact.

However, I've said this before: You and mom and dad are the primary disciple of your children!

The Church exists to come alongside as a partner and reinforce what is being taught in the home...this is the right order of things - HOME and CHURCH working together!

My buddy **J.D. Greear** – “God grows our children in the twin gardens of family and church.”

Secondly, an arrow: **Children must be Aimed.** The only way an arrow does any good is to be aimed in the right direction.

Parents, the best way I can tell you to aim your children is two-fold:

- One is to pray for them. I highly encourage you to pray for them every day.
- Second, is to live as an example to them. They have to see your relationship with the Lord and heart for the Kingdom is legit...is real...they can spot a fake from a mile away and especially can behind closed doors.

We have to live out what we are teaching and telling our kids is important. If not, we will lose them because they won't believe us!

They need an example! So, mom and dad, lead the way in serving, giving, being selfless, your time alone with the Lord – let them see that what you say is reality...it's a real life example they need!

Let them see your marriage and say, “I want that!” Let them see your joy and say, “I want that!” Let them see your passion for the Lord and that your priorities are in the right place, and say, “I want that!”

It's been said that "if you don't have a target, you'll hit it every time." Moms and dad, give your children a target to aim for by the example you set for them!

Finally, an arrow: **Children must be Released.** What a beautiful picture of godly young children being raised in a home that God has built.

A mom and dad have invested in that child...and when the time comes, that child upon being released from the home becomes a force for God! Do you see why they are a blessing from God?

I love this imagery that Solomon gives us here! When we:

- shape our children...
- aim our children into the Enemy's territory to be a force for godliness in a crooked world...
- when we release that child, they will go further and do greater things than we could ever imagine!

An arrow can go where the warrior shooting it cannot! And isn't this what we want for our children? We want them to penetrate the darkness and advance the Kingdom of God in an aggressive way!

We want them to know and believe that whatever they choose to do career-wise, God wants to...can...and will use them to change the world! This is what they are being prepared for!

Jim Elliot was a missionary to an unreached people group in South America. He was feeling the pressure from his family here in the States to come back home. He wrote to them...and listen to his words:

"Grieve not, then, if your sons seem to desert you. Remember how the Psalmist described children? He said that they were a heritage from the Lord, and that every man should be happy who had his quiver full of them. And what is a quiver full of arrows? And what are arrows for but to shoot? So, with strong arms of prayer, draw the bowstring back and let the arrows fly—all of them, straight at the Enemy's hosts."

Mom, dad...Grandmother, grandfather...have you ever thought of yourself as a warrior? That's what you are! We are warriors training up arrows that have been shaped, aimed and ready to be released for the glory of God!

Illus. Cleveland – I was speaking last week in Cleveland, TN at a conference and the subject was on being intentional with your time. And I shared with them these numbers. If you want to be sobered this morning, just listen to this as it relates to time.

The average age people are living to today is currently 75 years of age. That's 27,375 days you get to walk this earth. Moses in Psalm 90 prayed, "Lord, teach us to number our days!" So just do the math!

- If you are 18, you have 20,805 days left...
- If you are 30, you have 16,425 days left...
- If you are 40, you have 12,775 days left...
- If you are 50, you have 9,125 days left...
- If you are 60, you have 5,475 days left...

If you're 70 or older – congratulations, you made it! you could go at any time!

Now, think about this. When we talk about building a godly home and raising a family – 18 years is how long MOST of your kids will be under your roof. You have them for 6,570 days.

How you answer these questions today matter:

Who is building your home?
Who is raising your children?

Will you pray with me.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.