

A Father's Psalm

Psalm 127

Series: Summer in the Psalms

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As the bumper video just introduced, we are in a series called *The Summer in the Psalms*. And I want to thank Mark Lanier for kicking us off last week. This is going to be a great series. I've asked a number of our pastors to come and preach their favorite Psalm, and so you are going to get to hear from a variety of people this summer.

This is going to allow you an opportunity to hear from someone other than me – which is a good thing, and also allow me to get to our other campuses as well as take a brain break from studying each week.

You'll have to endure today though, you're stuck with me! And I want to go ahead and get after it. The title of the message today is: **A Father's Psalm**

Now, dads as you leave today as mentioned earlier you are getting an awesome trucker cap with the CF branding on it (this is ONLY for dads present!) and I want to encourage you to go out by our children's ministry and we have some construction trucks/tractors out there set up so you can take a picture with your boys.

If you're like me, and a dad of girls who probably are not interested in tractors and construction trucks, you're going to drag your girls out there anyway and make them get in a pic with you – you know why? Because it's our day – and for once we get to make the decision!

Now, this psalm though is the perfect psalm for Father's Day and it goes right along with our trucker and construction theme. You'll see why as we read it – Psalm 127 – it's only five verses.

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.”

Three points that flow from this passage of scripture today:

1. God builds the family
2. God defends the family
3. God blesses the family

Psalm 127 is a part of a group of psalms that we call the “Psalms of Ascent”. There are 15 of them – Psalm 120-134. Jerusalem of course is elevated...it's sits on a mountain and as Pilgrims

journeyed with their family and surrounding community to the city of God, they could see the beautiful Temple from miles away.

And these “Psalms of Ascent” would be repeated...sung in some cases in order to prepare the hearts of the people of Israel to worship, and sacrifice, and meet with God.

You’ve got to get in your mind the picture of what this would have been like – we’re talking people traveling together in BIG groups...they are attending these annual festivals together and here’s the deal – the dads were leading the way!

I often wonder if they were like so many of us dads on our way somewhere...tracking time...limiting pit stops...miffed that another group is passing them while they are stopped for dinner or a bathroom break!

Who knows?! What we do know is that these are the psalms read and repeated...and the insight we gain is especially meaningful for us on this Father’s Day. Let’s look at our first point:

1. God builds the family

Psalm 127:1a - “Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain...”

Now, we know that Solomon is the author of this Psalm. And if anyone knew a little something, something about building it was him!

He built massive gardens...he built beautiful homes...he was responsible for building the Temple that the pilgrims were on their way to worship to. Solomon knew what it was to build.

And here, he writes that if the LORD doesn’t build the house – Now, in a zeroed in kind of way Solomon is talking about the Temple here – the house of the Lord...in just a moment we’ll read about the Lord watching over the “city” – that’s Jerusalem.

Zooming out though, an interpretive bridge we can make is to a family’s home. And in the ancient world someone’s “house” included a person’s family...their reputation...their status in society.

Solomon states if the Lord isn’t building these things, then whoever is building...and whatever you are building on is vain.

Three times in (v. 1-2) the word “vain” is used. It’s a word that means useless, empty, worthless.

Dads, let me translate this in as simple way as possible. If we are not allowing the Lord to build our families, it’s not going to turn out very well.

This is NOT something we can just decide to not use the directions on! You know what I’m talking about?

Illus. Christmas/Birthday toys – I don't need these directions! How hard can it be?! Two hours in, I'm frustrated...angry...don't even want to celebrate Christmas or their birthday anymore!

Look, God wrote the instruction manual on the family. He designed it. He owns the blueprints. And the second we think we can just take over, edit, manage it on our own – that's the moment we are headed for disaster!

The family is God's idea. It was the first institution he created! Before he established the Church, he established and built the family – “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”

In God's created order, MEN, you are the leader of your home and responsible for implementing his design NOT in a “shiny happy people” kind of way, but instead in a servant leadership, Christ died for the Church kind of way.

Now, look...typically what happens on Mother's Day is we come in and we love and dote on moms AS we should! Then on Father's Day, we beat up the dads and tell them everywhere they are doing it wrong! This isn't going to be the case today.

Dads, I want to encourage you...and what I want to encourage you to do is to make sure you are inviting the Lord in on building your home.

When God builds the home and family, he starts with the foundation – NOTHING is more important than the foundation.

This starts with a personal relationship with Jesus. This is the foundation. It's ensuring the Lord is calling the shots. Is he the Lord of your life? Only after trusting in Christ and laying that solid foundation can you begin to build a home and family that honors him.

I'm reminded of the words of Jesus in: **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.**”

Often times when homes and marriages and families fall apart, 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! It won't last!

Illus. Coach Coker – funeral – told them it's good for us to be here because it's a reminder of our own mortality, and a reminder to live for what really matters! Coach was a GREAT coach,

but at the end of the day the State Championships, runners up, trophies don't matter...didn't any of that with him! Coach built his life on that which mattered most!

Men, innate within us is a desire to build. God put that "take the hill", work hard, climb the mountain mentality in us. We are hard-wired to build.

Let's just make sure we're building what God wants...let's make sure what we are building will outlast us...that it will count for eternity, and when we are investing in our wife and our kids, and raising our family to know and honor God, we are allowing him to building something through us that will outlast us!

God build the family, Secondly:

2. God defends the family

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

Dads, we can put any number of safeguards in place to protect our families...and we should. But whatever safeguards we have in place, they are an illusion if God is not the one standing guard and watching over them.

What this verse is teaching is that God is the ultimate protector and defender of the family. We can't do it...we can't go at it alone.

The enemy wants nothing more than to create chaos and division in your home. This has been his plan since Genesis 3. He wants to corrupt God's design...confuse God's plans as it relates to the home and wants to bring as much collateral damage as he possibly can to the family.

- This is what's so dangerous about the onslaught these days of the highly secularized and sexualized culture we are living in.
- The attempt to normalize the profane...and it's no longer hiding in the shadows, its being shoved right in front of them at an early age.

And if we are not careful (I'm not being overly dramatic here), they can catch a window into hell at such an early age that it can trip them up and Satan gain a foothold into their life that for years can take them down a road NONE of us as parents want our children and grandchildren going down!

THIS is why we need to be watchmen! Watchmen were people responsible for being on the lookout for enemies or threats to the city. Often times they would be on top of the walls of the city looking out or in watchtowers, and their job was to issue warning should any danger be headed the city's way.

They had a responsibility to stay awake and lookout for danger...you see the parallel? Dads, we are to be watchman for our families, but truly God sees things we don't see – and if he's not watching out, the scriptures say we can stay awake in vain.

This verse speaks to our dependance upon God. I can only do so much as a dad. I can check my daughter's phone...I can filter the apps that go on that phone...I can ask her tough questions...but at the end of the day, the Enemy is insidious...he's crafty and I need him watching over my girls.

This is where prayer comes in. As watchman for our families, we need to get good at calling on the GREAT watchman, God himself.

Notice “LORD” here is in all caps. This is Israel's covenant God we're talking about here. Psalm 121 (which Pastor Averri is going to be preaching about in a few weeks) says that this God neither slumber nor sleeps!

See, as watchman we get tired...we have to take naps, and so we call on the God who never closes his eyes...NOTHING gets past him and we ask him in prayer to watch over family...defend our home!

Let me get specific here and give you three prayers to pray for as it relates to God watching over your home:

- 1. Pray for God to strengthen your marriage**
- 2. Pray for God to soften your children's heart**
- 3. Pray for God to make you sensitive spiritual warfare**

There's an element of trust here. God, I trust you with my family and I entrust my family – that which is MOST precious to me, to you. I think this is what (v. 2) is getting 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.”

You show me someone trying to build a home and family without God, and I will show you someone that is “eating the bread of anxious toil”.

See, if we are not praying and inviting God in to be the builder and defender of the home, we are left trying to do it ourselves. And if we live like this, we'll overwork. We'll worry. We feel like we have to do this on our own.

And so, what do we do? We:

- Rise early...
- Go to bed late...
- Work our hardest to get ahead...
- Believe it's all on us to meet ALL the needs/wants of our family...

And what we end up doing is worrying...we're robbed of sleep...and usually instead of building our marriage and family this is how so many blow it up!

Without realizing it, we begin to try to control everything and everyone one around us! After all, we're in charge...at least that's what we think...

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

Illus. A.W. Tozer – (six sons and one daughter) - “The Blessedness of Possessing Nothing”

? – Have you ever done this? Just prayed, “God, I give you my family. I give you my home. I trust you with what I love and treasure the most.”

God builds the family. God defends the family. And then third and finally:

4. God blesses the family

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 (sorry, kids!)...but that they ARE your inheritance!

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!

The man who has his quiver full of “arrows” or children is described here as blessed by God. And isn't that interesting...the parallel between an arrow and children?

An arrow starts out as a crooked stick! And so do our children! The Bible says, they come from the womb speaking lies! And it's our job, dad...it's our responsibility to call on the Lord and allow him to work through us to make sure that crooked stick becomes shaped, sharpened and ultimately shot into the world.

Now, as we come to the final minutes of this message, let me speak to the dads directly about how we can best (from a scriptural standpoint) “sharpen the arrows”...the blessings called children God has given us.

Two disclaimers here. First, I know there are probably a lot of single parents in the room, many of which are single moms. I want you to know that we honor you. Many of you are doing the work of raising children on your own – can’t imagine a harder thing to do, and you can take these principles and apply them – they are certainly NOT just for dads.

I also want you (single moms) to know that we are working on a ministry right now...been working on it since January of this past year.

My prayer is that we will be able to unleash it in the Fall – it will be a ministry through our Family Life Center to try and connect children without fathers in the home to godly men in our church who will invest in them and take them fishing, hunting and teach them how to grill – just do many things with them while at the same time teaching them biblical values and being an example to them!

Second disclaimer: There are some of you here and your children are grown up and you have grandchildren and in some cases great grandchildren. It may be that you are living with some regret when it comes to the way you raised your child...you live in the would’ve and could’ve of life, and you carry a sense of guilt.

It could be that your grown children are not living for the Lord like you taught them and any time this subject is brought up, you look at it or listen to it with deep remorse.

Larry Osborne wrote a great book...I love the title - *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.”**

As I give these practical applications today as it relates to being a dad and raising godly children, let’s not wear any guilt or be burdened by what we could have done better.

We dedicate our children to the Lord when they are born, and they are on loan to us from him until the day they die. We mess up as parents and by God’s grace we own it, apologize for it, and keep moving forward trusting the Lord to erase from their memory or at a minimum soften where we failed.

So, how can we make sure our arrows are sharpened...that we raise these blessings from God in such a way that we give them the best possible way to live their lives as a return blessing to him?

I get these three items from Travis Gilbert who wrote a book called “Parenting by the Book”.

1. Cherish them fondly

Illus. New Orleans – went with my best friends and one of them has a motto he lives by (test in college) but a better one...and I've watched him do this for nearly 20 years now as our kids are becoming seniors. He tags it with the words: “capture the days”?

It makes me ask, “am I capturing the days I have at home with my children?” I read something on social media somewhere last week that 90% of the time we spend with our kids will be by the time they turn 18. Think about that – Amazing. Sobering.

We only have limited time and we better cherish them!

I have for the last several years given the talk to the seniors at the graduation weekend here at the church. And I always talk to them, and tell the parents that it's hard to believe that if your child is 18 years old, they are coming to the close of living 6,570 days under your roof! Goes by “just like that!”

I know this is Father's Day, but listen to this admonition Paul wrote in **1 Thess 2:7** – **“But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.”**

We need to be gentle with our children...cherish our every moment with them, even when it seems most hard to do! That's hard when you're a young parent and it's nighttime. (toothpaste/nighttime). You don't want to cherish, you want to choke!

Cherish them fondly. Make memories. Dad, play catch...wrestle on the floor! Be there for them at their games and dote on those girls every day! You can't hold onto time, so hold onto them while you can!

2. Rear them tenderly

We just read Paul's words about being gentle and tender...speak words of life into them. Again, men we are builders...don't tear down. Build up! Speak words of life over them!

Colossians 3:21 – **“Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”**

This was so important to Paul, he wrote about it once here and then again in **Eph. 6:4** – **“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”**

“Bring them up” – this speaks for a process and denotes that this takes time. Rearing a child tenderly does not mean the absence of discipline, but rather the presence of it.

One of the most tender things we can do is to make sure we are giving our children a fence to run in, with clear rules and healthy barriers that they know they are not to trespass...and if they do discipline will incur. BUT our rules ALWAYS have to be in the context of relationship.

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

Be tender. Listen...empathize...remember what it was like to be a kid! You didn't have it all together. Be patient with them.

Cherish them fondly. Rear them tenderly. And then third and finally:

3. Sustain them spiritually.

At the end of the day, this is what's MOST important! This is our duty parents, our job. We are to lead them in the ways of the Lord. We are to be the lead disciplers in our home.

Dads, do your children see a man committed to the Lord? These statistics come from *Focus on the Family*.

“Did you know that if a child is the first person in a household to become a Christian, there is a 3.5 percent probability everyone else in the household will follow? If the mother is the first to become a Christian, there is a 17 percent probability everyone else in the household will follow. But if the father is first, there is a 93 percent probability everyone else in the household will follow.”

Dads, your faith matters. And we can't check out on this under the auspices of “I don't know what to do or say when it comes to raising a godly son or daughter.” You've got God in you and a copy of this Word that belongs to you.

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.”

We must cultivate a spiritual appetite within our children...they need to see us praying...they need to see us in God's word. We need to be spending time with them where conversation is promoted and where questions can be asked (that means away from the phone & TV) and be together.

We need to bring them in on what we are doing as their parents...why we are making decisions to give...why they are not allowed to be on that team that is going to take/consume their time and away from the church and gathering with like-minded believers.

We need to be explaining to them and teaching them what they see here at church – baptism, Lord's Supper, God's Word, the music we sing. Ask them questions about what they are learning

through the sermon and life group. Let them hear us talking about our schedule and why/where we are serving in the church.

Our children are watching us and by our life are we teaching them to love Jesus with all their heart, soul, mind and strength? Do they know that God is a priority in our home...it's on us dads to lead the way!

And listen, let the church be your partner in this!

Illus. Honor my dad - Based on my experience, this is what I learned because I had a mom and dad that partnered with the Church.

1. **I learned God has a place in my life.**
2. **I learned church is a priority.** (Didn't drop off, brought to church – wasn't perfect/plenty of fighting, marry and bury)
3. **I learned the beauty of relationships.** (multi-generational relationships, Wed. night dinners, funeral this past weekend – Marlow's. Mrs. Fredrick, Mrs. Shoebridge)
4. **I learned the value of service.** (R.A.'s, Nursing Homes)
5. **I learned how to give.** (tithing – “10/10/80” give me a dollar)
6. **I learned how to use my spiritual gift.** (let me use my spiritual gifts and even supported me to do so. Helped me with a small scholarship)
7. **I learned how to worship.** (see a guy lift his hands, listening to people pray, singing hymns)
8. **I learned that life didn't revolve me.** (someone needed help, showers for the ladies, cooking for the passing of loved ones – you stepped up, you were there!)

Dads, we will never regret pointing them to Jesus. Children are a heritage from the Lord. What a joy to have them, raise them...and one day release them into the world to be servants of Christ. Let's pray.

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.