

Building Your House

Mother's Day 2018

May 13, 2018

In preparation for Mother's Day, we will look at one of the great scriptural passages about the principles and blessings of family life. Whether or not you are a parent, may you be encouraged and challenged to know God better and trust Him more.

Psalm 127 (NLT)

Unless the LORD builds a house, the work of the builders is wasted.

Unless the LORD protects a city, guarding it with sentries will do no good.

*It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night,
anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to his loved ones.*

Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him.

Children born to a young man are like arrows in a warrior's hands.

How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them!

He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.

DAY 1: Laying the Foundation – Children as a Unique Gift

As we look at this passage in the context of parenting, let's first examine the concept of children as a gift.

Psalm 127:3 - *Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him.* (NLT)

1. What are some of the tangible blessings children can bring?
 - Proverbs 17:6
 - Proverbs 31:28
 - John 16:21
 - 3 John 1:4
2. Read the following verses and reflect on the nature of this gift. To whom do our children belong? How should this truth impact our attitude toward our children?
 - James 1:17
 - Psalm 24:1

3. Our children can be the source of some of our greatest joys and some of our deepest pain. How can the experiences we have with our children, both good and bad, give us insight into God's heart for us? (For extra study, consider the following passages.)
 - John 3:16
 - Zephaniah 3:17
 - Matthew 23:37
 - Hosea 11
 - Luke 15

The greatest gift that children bring is a greater understanding of the Father's love for us!

DAY 2: Who is Building Your House?

Psalm 127:1a - *Unless the LORD builds a house, the work of the builders is wasted.*

I don't know about you, but I certainly don't want my efforts in life to be wasted. But that is exactly what can happen when we don't put "first things first" in our lives.

1. Read Matthew 7:24-27 and Colossians 3:1-4. What would it look like if you allowed the Lord to "build your house" instead of relying on your own efforts or worldly priorities? What is one change you can make to "build your house on the rock"?
2. Anyone who has had a baby knows how relentless they can be in expressing that they need something! It stems from their complete inability to meet their own needs, and therefore, their complete dependence on their parents. What can you learn from this example?
3. Read Jeremiah 29:13. How might you seek after God with all your heart? How might your pursuit of God impact your children?
4. What role can life groups play in this pursuit?

DAY 3: Protection and Anxious Labors

Psalm 127:1b - *Unless the LORD protects a city, guarding it with sentries will do no good.*

One of the biggest temptations in parenting is to succumb to worry and fear about our children... we worry about their physical safety, their emotional health, their choices, their grades, their friends, their future, their relationship with God, and on, and on, and on.

What are the things you worry about most regarding your children and/or yourself?

According to Psalm 127:1b, who alone has the ability to protect you and your children?

Psalm 127:2 (NLT) - *It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to his loved ones.*

Psalm 127:2 (Amp) - *It is vain for you to rise early, to retire late, to eat the bread of anxious labors—for He gives [blessings] to His beloved even in his sleep.*

Taken out of context, this verse could appear to promote laziness or a poor work ethic. Given that other passages of scripture do not support this notion (Colossians 3:23-24; Proverbs 6:9-11), we need to look further for a proper interpretation...

Read Proverbs 31:15-18, 25, 31. In contrast to the person in Psalm 127:2, this woman is praised for working hard from early morning to late at night. What is the difference between the person in Proverbs 31 and Psalm 127:2? Is it an external or internal difference? In whom or what are they placing their trust?

Read Psalm 139:13-16. God has an amazing heart for each one of us. How can these verses help you let go and trust God with your future and/or your child's future?

One of the pitfalls of parenting is to subconsciously strive to get our own desires (for love, esteem, respect, etc.) met through our children. What are some of the ways you catch yourself doing this? Read Isaiah 55:2. How can you break out of this common pitfall?

How can we live in freedom from fear and anxiety and experience the rest God promises to His loved ones, especially with regard to our children?

- Isaiah 26:3
- Philippians 4:6-7
- 1 Peter 5:7

DAY 4: Raising Arrows

Psalm 127: 4-5a - *Children born to a young man are like arrows in a warrior's hands. How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them!*

In the midst of the world's ongoing spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:12), God calls us to lovingly shape our "arrows" to accomplish their purpose and reach their target.

Read Proverbs 22:6. The Hebrew word for "train up" is the same as the word "dedicate," as in how the Israelites dedicated the temple. How does this shed light on the attitude with which we raise our kids?

What are some of the ways we can prepare our arrows for battle (train up our children)?

People often try to claim Proverbs 22:6 as a "magic formula" – i.e. "If I do all the right things as a parent, my kids will turn out just the way I want them to." How is this a dangerous way to approach parenting?

What is a warrior's job regarding his arrows? Does he have control over where his arrow lands? What are outside factors that might affect whether an arrow reaches its target? Can we, as parents, control what happens to our children or what choices they make?

This lack of control can be frightening, especially when we reach the stage of letting our arrows fly. How can the following promises of God be an encouragement to you?

- Isaiah 55:11
- 2 Peter 3:9

“They’re arrows. And we’re the warriors.

These arrows we carve, shape, and balance are going to journey far beyond our reach. They’re what God is going to use tomorrow.

By God’s grace, they’ll be part of the Church on the offense, against whom the gates of hell won’t be able to stand. They can storm the enemy’s stronghold, rescue those bound in darkness, bring the light and freedom of Jesus to those in sin’s chains.

This is God’s call on our children, as the nations rage.

And this shaping and — one day soon — the aiming is the call on you and me.”

-Ruth Schwenk (www.thebettermom.com)

DAY 5: Combating the Accuser

Psalm 127:5b - *He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.*

Besides being part of a city’s protection against invaders, city gates were places of central activity in biblical times. It was at the city gates that important business transactions were made, court was convened, disputes were settled, and public announcements were heralded. Children could serve as a source of support if someone were to make an accusation against you.

In today’s world, we may face accusations from others. But far more subtle and insidious are the accusations of the enemy. He can be particularly ruthless in condemning us with regard to our children and our parenting.

Read 1 Peter 5:8. In what areas do you find yourself most susceptible to the accusations of the enemy? How might you become more aware of his deceptive tactics?

The enemy spews lies about our worth, our value, our performance, and more. We must combat those lies with the truth of God’s Word. Do NOT allow the enemy to steal your joy! How do the following verses encourage you?

- John 10:10
- John 16:33
- Romans 8:31-39
- 2 Timothy 1:7

When you allow God to build your house, let go of your fear and anxious labors, trust Him with the outcome, and combat the lies of the enemy, you will experience the peace and freedom that only He can bring. By His Spirit you will be empowered to shape, aim, and release the “arrows” He has entrusted to you. May you find joy in the children of your youth! Happy Mother’s Day!