

The Christian Home, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 6: Children: A Heritage from the Lord

Psalm 127; Psalm 128

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Psalms 127 and 128 set out a theology of the home and of children that runs sharply against the grain of much modern thinking, and the teacher should be ready to commend it clearly and joyfully. Two truths anchor the lesson. First, the home is to be built by the Lord and centered on the fear of the Lord; apart from Him, even sincere and exhausting effort is 'vain.' The God-centered home is not one that merely adds a little religion to an otherwise self-built life, but one in which dependence on God and reverence for Him are the foundation. Second, children are 'a heritage from the Lord,' a reward and a gift, to be received with gratitude and raised with purpose, 'like arrows' aimed at a target. Against a culture that often treats children as a burden, an accessory, or an obstacle to self-fulfillment, Scripture assigns them the highest worth as a trust from God. This lesson lays the groundwork for Lessons 7 and 8, which take up how that trust is to be carried out.

Pastoral sensitivity is essential here, because these psalms can be misheard. They are inspired songs of blessing, not mechanical guarantees or a scoreboard of faithfulness. The teacher should take care not to wound those for whom this subject is tender: couples who long for children and have none, parents whose grown children have wandered from the faith despite faithful raising, single parents carrying the load alone, and those who have lost a child. The high view of children must never become a measure of a person's worth or a verdict on their godliness; childlessness is not a curse, and a wayward child is not always the proof of a parent's failure. Frame the lesson so that everyone, including those without children, hears a call to invest in the next generation, for the church family is full of young 'arrows' who need godly adults to help aim them.

Beyond information, this lesson aims to reshape the heart's posture toward God and toward the young. It calls anxious, self-reliant builders to rest in the God who builds the house and gives His beloved sleep. It calls weary parents to lift their eyes from mere survival to the glorious, purposeful work of launching arrows for the kingdom. And it calls the whole church to a long, generational vision, faith handed down to children and children's children, that dignifies the daily, unglamorous labor of raising the next generation in the Lord. The disciple being formed here is someone who builds with God, receives the young as a gift, and pours life into them with purpose and hope.

Question 1

Student Question:

Psalm 127 opens, “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” (v. 1). What is the psalmist teaching about God’s place in the building of a home and a life, and why does he call even hard, sincere effort ‘vain’ when God is left out?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The psalm opens with two images of human effort that come to nothing without God: building a house and guarding a city. Both are good and necessary labors. The point is not that effort is wrong (the builder still builds, the watchman still watches), but that effort divorced from God is ultimately empty. The Hebrew word rendered ‘vain’ is the same word translated ‘vanity’ throughout Ecclesiastes: a breath, a vapor, something that slips through the fingers. Work without God is not evil; it is futile.

Note that ‘house’ here carries a double meaning. It is the physical household and also the family, the dynasty, the home being built across a lifetime. So the psalm speaks directly to the project of raising a family. A parent can do everything the parenting books advise, can provide and protect and plan, and still build in vain if the Lord is not the true builder. The decisive factor in a home is not the skill or effort of the parents but the presence and work of God.

This is humbling and freeing at once. Humbling, because it punctures the proud notion that we can secure our families by our own competence. Freeing, because it lifts a crushing weight: the outcome does not rest finally on us. We build, and we build hard, but we build as those who depend on God to do what we cannot. The teacher should help students feel both the humility and the freedom in this opening line.

Connect this to the whole study. A Christian home is not constructed by technique but received from and built with God. Every lesson that follows, on raising children, discipline, honoring parents, hospitality, assumes this foundation: unless the Lord builds the house, we labor in vain.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Human effort apart from God as ultimately ‘vain’ (a vapor)
- Effort itself not condemned, but effort divorced from God
- ‘House’ as both household and family built over a lifetime
- Dependence on God as the decisive factor in a home
- The humility and the freedom of building with God, not instead of Him

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that even sincere effort is ‘vain’ without God?
- How is this truth both humbling and freeing for parents?
- What would it look like to build your home with God rather than for Him?

Question 2

Student Question:

The psalm pictures someone rising early and staying up late, 'eating the bread of anxious toil,' and contrasts that with the rest God gives to those He loves (v. 2). Where in your life as a parent, a worker, or a homemaker are you eating the bread of anxious toil, striving as though everything depended on you? What would it look like to trade that anxiety for trust this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 2 paints a recognizable portrait: rising early, going to bed late, eating 'the bread of anxious toil.' It is the picture of the driven, worried life, the parent or worker who carries the world on their shoulders because they believe everything depends on them. Against this the psalm sets a tender promise: 'he gives to his beloved sleep.' Rest is the gift of the God who is actually running the universe while we sleep.

Help students locate their own 'anxious toil.' For one it is the parent lying awake over a child's future; for another the worker who cannot stop because the family's security feels entirely on them; for another the homemaker drowning in the relentless demands of the household. The issue is not hard work (the Bible commends diligence) but the anxiety that reveals we are trusting ourselves rather than God.

The remedy is not laziness but trust. The contrast in the psalm is between anxious self-reliance and restful dependence. The same person can work just as hard but carry it differently, doing their part and entrusting the rest to God, even sleeping in peace because the city has a Watchman who never slumbers. Invite each student to name one anxiety to hand over to God this week, and one concrete practice of trust, perhaps a real Sabbath rest, an honest prayer of release, or simply going to bed instead of stewing.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- 'The bread of anxious toil' as driven, self-reliant worry
- Rest as God's gift to those who trust Him
- Diligence commended, anxious self-reliance exposed
- Trading anxiety for trust through concrete practices

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you eating 'the bread of anxious toil' right now?
- What is the difference between hard work and anxious self-reliance?
- What anxiety could you hand to God this week, and how?

Question 3**Student Question:**

The psalmist declares, “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward” (v. 3). The words ‘heritage’ and ‘reward’ are the language of inheritance and gift. What does it tell us about God, and about the worth of every child, that He calls children a heritage and a reward rather than a burden or an accident?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 3 makes a striking declaration: ‘children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.’ Both words are weighty. A ‘heritage’ is an inheritance, something handed down from a father, in the Old Testament often the very land God granted His people. A ‘reward’ is a gift bestowed by grace. Children, the psalm insists, come from the hand of God Himself; they are not a biological accident or a social burden but a trust given by the Giver of all good gifts.

This assigns every child immense worth. If children are a heritage from the Lord, then each one is valuable not for what they produce or how convenient they are, but because God gave them. This grounds a Christian conviction about the sanctity and dignity of every child, born and unborn, wanted and unexpected. The teacher can let this truth quietly inform a culture that often measures children by cost and convenience.

The teacher should handle this verse with pastoral care, for it touches a tender place. The psalm celebrates children as a gift, but it must not be turned into a verdict that those without children are without God’s favor, or that childlessness is a curse. Scripture honors many faithful servants who had no children, and the Lord Himself was unmarried and childless. The point is not that everyone must have children to be blessed, but that wherever God gives children, they are to be received as the high gift they are. Those longing for children should hear comfort, not condemnation.

Apply the truth broadly. Even those without children of their own share in this calling, for the church family overflows with young people who need godly adults to value and invest in them. To receive children as a heritage is a posture for the whole congregation, not only for parents.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- ‘Heritage’ and ‘reward’ as the language of inheritance and gift
- Children given by God, not biological accidents or social burdens
- The worth and dignity of every child grounded in God’s giving
- Pastoral care: childlessness is not a curse or a sign of disfavor
- Receiving the young as a gift as a calling for the whole church

Discussion Prompts

- What does it say about God that He calls children a ‘heritage’ and ‘reward’?
- How does this shape the worth we assign to every child?

- How can those without children of their own share in this calling?

Question 4

Student Question:

It is easy to say children are a blessing and to live as though they are mainly an inconvenience. Whether you are a parent, a grandparent, or someone who pours into the children of your church family, where have you been treating the young people God has placed near you as an interruption rather than a gift? How could you begin to receive and treasure them more deliberately?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application confronts the gap between what we profess and how we live. Nearly everyone will affirm that children are a blessing, yet the daily reality can drift toward treating them as interruptions to our real plans, obstacles to our rest, or projects to be managed. The question invites honest reflection on that gap, without shame, for every tired parent feels it.

Broaden the application as the question does, to grandparents and to those who pour into the children of the church. The young people in a congregation, the neighbor's kids, the nieces and nephews, the children in the class one teaches, are all part of the next generation God places near us. The question is whether we see them as a gift to treasure or a nuisance to endure.

Move toward one concrete way to receive and treasure them more deliberately: unhurried attention, real presence rather than distracted proximity, words of delight, time given without resentment. Children know whether they are enjoyed or merely tolerated. Invite each student to choose one young person and one way to communicate, this week, that they are a gift and not a burden.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gap between professing children a blessing and treating them as a burden
- The temptation to see children as interruptions or projects
- Investing in the young of the wider church family
- Communicating delight through presence and attention

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you treat the young people near you as interruptions?
- Do the children in your life know they are enjoyed or merely tolerated?
- What is one way to treasure a young person more deliberately this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

The psalmist compares children to “arrows in the hand of a warrior” (vv. 4–5). Arrows are not kept in the quiver; they are aimed and released toward a target. What does this image teach about the purpose and intentionality God intends for parenting, and what is the target a Christian parent is aiming a child toward?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The image shifts from inheritance to weaponry: ‘Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth.’ The picture is purposeful and even strategic. An arrow is crafted, straightened, sharpened, and then, crucially, aimed and released. It is not made to be kept in the quiver but to be sent toward a target with intention. So parenting, the psalm suggests, is not merely keeping children safe and fed; it is preparing and aiming them for a purpose beyond the home.

Two implications follow. First, parenting is intentional, not accidental. An archer aims; he does not fire at random and hope. Christian parents are called to raise children on purpose, with a goal in view, shaping character and faith rather than merely reacting to each day. Second, parenting is preparation for release. The goal is not to keep children dependent forever but to launch them, straight and true, into lives of their own that serve God. Good parenting works toward a healthy letting go.

Name the target clearly, since the question asks for it. The aim of Christian parenting is not merely successful, happy, or well-behaved children, good as those are, but children who know, love, and follow the Lord, who will one day stand on their own in the faith and serve His kingdom. Everything else is secondary to that. An arrow aimed at the wrong target flies just as far but lands in the wrong place.

The teacher can connect this to the next two lessons. Lesson 7 takes up how parents aim the arrow (teaching the faith), and Lesson 8 takes up the shaping and straightening (discipline). Here the point is simply to lift parents’ eyes to the truth that their daily labor has a glorious aim.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Children as arrows: crafted, aimed, and released with purpose
- Parenting as intentional, not accidental
- Parenting as preparation for healthy release, not perpetual dependence
- The target named: children who know, love, and follow the Lord
- Groundwork for teaching (Lesson 7) and discipline (Lesson 8)

Discussion Prompts

- What does the image of an arrow teach about the purpose of parenting?
- What is the true target a Christian parent aims a child toward?
- How does ‘aiming to release’ shape the way we raise children?

Question 6

Student Question:

An archer who never decides on a target will never hit one. Many parents are so busy surviving the day that they have never asked where they are aiming their children. If you have children, or influence over any, what are you actually aiming them toward? What is one way you could parent (or grandparent, or mentor) with more deliberate purpose this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application presses the arrow image into real life. The hardest truth for many parents is not that they aim their children at the wrong target but that, worn down by the daily grind, they have never consciously chosen a target at all. They are surviving, not aiming. The days are so full of logistics that the larger question, 'where am I sending this child?', never gets asked.

Help parents (and grandparents and mentors) actually answer the question. What are they aiming the children in their care toward? If they examine how they spend time, money, and energy, what target does it reveal, athletic success, academic achievement, popularity, comfort, or genuine faith and character? The calendar and the checkbook often expose the real aim more honestly than our stated values.

Move toward one deliberate act of purposeful parenting this week: a conversation about the Lord, a habit of family prayer or Scripture begun, a reordering of the schedule to put first things first, an intentional word of character formation. The goal is to shift, even slightly, from reactive survival toward intentional aiming. Even small course corrections, repeated over years, send an arrow far.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Surviving the day versus consciously aiming children
- Time, money, and energy as honest indicators of our real target
- Reordering toward faith and character as first things
- Small, repeated course corrections sending an arrow far

Discussion Prompts

- If you examined your calendar, what target are you actually aiming for?
- What are you intentionally aiming the children in your life toward?
- What is one purposeful step you could take with them this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Psalm 128 begins, “Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!” (v. 1), and from that fear of the Lord flows the picture of a fruitful, peaceful home (vv. 2–4). Why does the psalmist root the blessing of the home in the fear of the Lord, and what does it mean for the fear of the Lord to be the true foundation of a family?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Psalm 128 grounds the whole picture of family blessing in one thing: ‘Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways.’ The fruitful wife, the olive-shoot children, the bread of honest labor, the peace upon the home, all of it flows from a life organized around reverence for God. The fear of the Lord is not one ingredient among many in a happy home; it is the foundation on which the rest is built.

Define the ‘fear of the Lord’ rightly. It is not cringing terror but reverent awe, taking God seriously as God, honoring Him, trusting Him, and walking in obedience to Him. ‘Who walks in his ways’ is the psalm’s own explanation: the fear of the Lord is a life actually directed by God’s will, not merely a feeling about God. A home built on the fear of the Lord is one where God’s authority and presence shape the ordinary patterns of daily life.

This is the hinge of both psalms. Psalm 127 says the Lord must build the house; Psalm 128 says the builder must fear the Lord. Together they teach that the blessing of a home is not finally about parenting technique, family structure, or favorable circumstances, but about whether God is genuinely honored at the center. A home can have every advantage and miss this, or have every hardship and possess it.

Again, guard against reading the psalm as a mechanical promise. It describes the normal pattern of a God-fearing life, the way blessing generally flows, not an ironclad guarantee that the godly will never suffer or that every God-fearing home will look identical. The teacher should hold up the centrality of the fear of the Lord while leaving room for the mystery of God’s providence in homes that walk with Him through real hardship.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The fear of the Lord as the foundation of family blessing
- The ‘fear of the Lord’ as reverent awe and obedient walking, not terror
- Psalm 127 and 128 together: God builds, and the builder fears the Lord
- Blessing rooted in honoring God, not in technique or circumstance
- The psalm as the normal pattern of blessing, not a mechanical guarantee

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to ‘fear the Lord,’ and how is that different from terror?
- Why does the psalm root family blessing in reverence for God?
- How does the fear of the Lord become the foundation of a home?

Question 8

Student Question:

A home takes on the character of whatever sits at its center, whether that is the fear of the Lord, the pursuit of comfort, the worship of achievement, or simply the tyranny of the urgent. Honestly, what currently sits at the center of your home? What would it look like to reorder your household so that the fear of the Lord is genuinely first?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application asks the diagnostic question: what actually sits at the center of this home? A home takes on the character of whatever it truly revolves around. If achievement is the center, the home will be anxious and driven. If comfort is the center, it will be soft and self-indulgent. If the urgent is the center, it will be frantic and reactive. If the fear of the Lord is the center, it will, over time, take on peace, order, and joy.

Help students discern the real center, not the stated one. Most Christian families would say God is at the center; the honest question is whether the rhythms of the home reflect it. What gets protected on the calendar? What prompts the most emotion when threatened, a child's grades and games, or a child's soul? What does the family organize itself around? The answers reveal the true center.

Move toward concrete reordering. Putting the fear of the Lord first might look like establishing a rhythm of family worship, protecting the Lord's Day and the gathering of the church, making decisions by asking first what honors God, or simply talking about the Lord in the ordinary course of the day. Invite each student to name one specific way they could move the fear of the Lord nearer the center of their home this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A home taking on the character of whatever sits at its center
- Discerning the real center versus the stated center
- Calendar, money, and emotion as indicators of the true center
- Concrete reordering to put the fear of the Lord first

Discussion Prompts

- Honestly, what sits at the center of your home right now?
- What do your calendar and your strongest reactions reveal about that center?
- What is one way to move the fear of the Lord nearer the center this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Psalm 128 stretches the vision across generations: a wife like a fruitful vine, children like olive shoots around the table, and finally the prayer, “May you see your children’s children!” (vv. 3, 6). Taken with Psalm 127, how do these psalms cast a high, God-centered, multigenerational vision of the family, in which faith is received as a heritage and handed on as a legacy? What is at stake for the next generation in how seriously we take this calling?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block, gathering both psalms into a single, sweeping vision of the family. Psalm 128 extends the picture across a whole lifetime and beyond: a wife like a fruitful vine ‘within your house,’ children like olive shoots ‘around your table,’ and the closing prayer, ‘May you see your children’s children!’ This is not merely a snapshot of one happy household; it is a vision of faith and blessing flowing down through the generations.

The teacher should draw out how high and how long this vision is. It is high because it treats the family as a central arena of God’s blessing and a primary means by which faith is carried into the future. It is long because it thinks not in terms of a single generation but in terms of children and children’s children, a legacy of faith handed down like a treasure. The biblical family is meant to be a relay race in which the baton of faith passes from hand to hand across the years.

Taken with Psalm 127, the two psalms teach that children are a heritage received from God and a legacy entrusted to us to pass on. We receive faith from those before us and we hand it to those after us. This is exactly the pattern of 2 Timothy 1:5, where sincere faith lived first in Lois the grandmother, then in Eunice the mother, then in Timothy. Faith is not automatically inherited like eye color, but it is meant to be deliberately transmitted, taught, modeled, and prayed into the next generation.

Name what is at stake, because it is enormous. Every generation of the church is one generation away from forgetting the Lord. The faith does not pass on by accident; where parents and grandparents and the wider church fail to teach and model it, the chain can break. This is the sober weight beneath the joyful vision: the next generation’s knowledge of God is, under God, genuinely entrusted to us. Lesson 7 will take up directly how that transmission is to happen.

Close this question with both hope and pastoral care. The vision of children’s children is a prayer and a blessing, not a guarantee or a club. Some faithful parents watch a child wander; some long for children they do not have; some came to faith with no godly heritage behind them at all and now begin a new legacy themselves. God is the God of new beginnings as well as long lineages. The teacher should cast the high, generational vision compellingly while assuring every student that their place in God’s family does not depend on a perfect family tree.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A high, God-centered, multigenerational vision of the family
- Faith as a heritage received and a legacy to be handed on

- The relay of faith across generations (2 Timothy 1:5: Lois, Eunice, Timothy)
- Faith deliberately transmitted, not automatically inherited
- What is at stake: the church always one generation from forgetting God
- Pastoral care for wandering children, the childless, and new beginnings

Discussion Prompts

- How do these psalms cast a vision that spans generations?
- What does it mean that faith must be transmitted, not just inherited?
- What is at stake for the next generation in how seriously we take this?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across both psalms, the God who builds the house, the children given as a heritage, the arrows to be aimed, the home built on the fear of the Lord, and the blessing passed to children's children. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these psalms. What is the single truth about children and the home that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone gathers the whole of both psalms: the God who builds the house, the rest He gives His beloved, the children received as a heritage, the arrows to be aimed, the home founded on the fear of the Lord, and the blessing that reaches to children's children. Ask each student to name one specific way Jesus is forming them, resisting vague generalities.

Different truths will land on different people. An anxious, self-reliant builder may need to rest in the God who builds the house. A weary parent may need to lift their eyes from survival to the glorious aim of launching arrows for the kingdom. A grandparent may be stirred to invest in children's children. A childless believer may hear a call to pour into the young of the church. Someone may need simply to move the fear of the Lord nearer the center of their home. Let the Spirit press the door He chooses.

Close by lifting students' eyes to the long view. To raise the next generation in the Lord, whether one's own children or the church's, is one of the most significant works a person can give their life to, a labor whose fruit may outlive us by generations. Send students out not crushed by the weight of it but encouraged that the Lord who builds the house is building still, and that every faithful investment in the young is an arrow loosed toward eternity.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Synthesis of the God-built home, children as heritage, and generational faith
- Formation meeting parents, grandparents, and the childless alike

- The long view: raising the next generation as a work that outlives us
- Encouragement that the Lord is still building the house

Discussion Prompts

- What single truth from these psalms do you most need to carry this week?
- Where is Jesus forming you, in rest, in purpose, or in investing in the young?
- How does the long, generational view change how you see your daily labor?