

The Christian Home

Lesson 6: Children: A Heritage from the Lord -- Psalm 127; Psalm 128

Imagine the pilgrims climbing the road up to Jerusalem, singing as they go. These two psalms were among their traveling songs, sung by ordinary families on the long walk up to worship, parents with children on their shoulders and grandparents bringing up the rear. And what did they sing about? Not armies or empires, but houses and children and bread and beds. They sang about the things you and I spend our days on, the work that fills our hands and the little ones who fill our homes. God cares about the ordinary life of a family, and He put songs about it right in the middle of His songbook.

The first song begins with a line that could hang over every nursery and every front door: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.” You can pour your whole self into building a home, the early mornings, the late nights, the endless worry, and if God is not at the center of it, you are just stacking bricks in the sand. But the same psalm says that to those He loves, God gives sleep. There is rest for the parent who has learned to build with God rather than instead of Him.

Then comes the line that turns the whole culture on its head. “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.” A heritage. A reward. Not an interruption to the real business of life, not a drain on the budget, not an obstacle to freedom, but a gift handed down from the hand of God, like an inheritance from a loving Father. And the psalmist reaches for a startling picture: children are like arrows in the hand of a warrior. Arrows are not made to be admired in the quiver. They are made to be aimed and let fly. Parenting, it turns out, has a target.

The second song widens the lens to a whole lifetime and beyond, a man who fears the Lord, a wife like a fruitful vine, children like young olive shoots around the table, and then, if God is gracious, the joy of seeing your children’s children. It is a picture of generational blessing, of faith handed down like a family treasure from one set of hands to the next. Whether you have a houseful of children, one precious child, none at all, or a quiver long since emptied, these psalms have something to say to you about how God sees the next generation and how He invites us to pour our lives into them. Read them slowly, and let the pilgrims teach you their song.

Group Discussion: Our culture often sends mixed messages about children, treating them sometimes as a lifestyle accessory and sometimes as a burden or an obstacle to personal freedom and success. Scripture calls them ‘a heritage from the Lord’ and ‘a reward.’ How might a home, and a whole church, look different if we truly received children, and the next generation, as a gift from God rather than as a burden?

Personal Reflection: Think about the ‘house’ you are building with your life, your home, your work, your plans. Be honest about how much of it you are trying to build in your own strength, by your own anxious effort. Where do you most need to stop striving and let the Lord build the house?

Read Psalm 127; Psalm 128

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?

9. 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?
10. 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?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 19:13–15, Jesus welcoming the children and rebuking those who would keep them away; Proverbs 22:6, training up a child in the way he should go; 2 Timothy 1:5, the sincere faith that lived first in Lois and Eunice and then in Timothy; 3 John 4, no greater joy than to hear that one’s children walk in the truth; Genesis 33:5, the children God has graciously given His servant