

Sermon: The Blessings of a Godly Home (Psalm 128)

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. In what area of life do you wear a big 'L' (learner)?
2. Describe a relationship deepening event you experienced around a dining table?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Note how many times that 'bless' and 'fear the Lord' are used in Psalm 128. Explore the meaning behind these words? Why are these words the focus of this chapter?
2. In what ways do Psalm 127:1-2 deepen our understanding of what is said in Psalm 128? Where else can these words be applied other than a 'godly home'?
3. Pastor Ashwin used the quotation: "There is a general assumption prevalent in the world that it is extremely difficult to be a Christian... But this is far from the truth as the east is from the west. The easiest thing in the world is to be a Christian. What is hard is to be a sinner." (Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, p. 115)

How does Matthew 11:28-30 connect with these sentences?

4. In the agricultural society where Psalm 128 was first prayed, the two picture analogies of a fruit vine and olive shoots are used. Give some analogies that would be relevant and understandable in our current society.
5. Compare Psalm 128:3a with John 15:1-8. The Psalmist suggests that the husband nurture his wife so that she will become 'a fruitful vine.' How can we extend this 'nurturing' to others?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. Read: Ezekiel 34:25-31. What 'savage beasts' do you contend with in your relationships? What words of blessing / hope are given to you in this passage? How can our group pray for you?
2. Daniel W. Whittle wrote the hymn 'Showers of Blessing' in 1883. Choose a phrase from the hymn to give you encouragement (hope) for this week.
 1. There shall be showers of blessing his is the promise of love;
There shall be seasons refreshing, Sent from the Savior above.
Showers of blessing, Showers of blessing we need:
Mercy-drops round us are falling, But for the showers we
plead.
 2. There shall be showers of blessing, Precious reviving again;
Over the hills and the valleys, Sound of abundance of rain.
 3. There shall be showers of blessing; Send them upon us, O Lord;
Grant to us now a refreshing ,Come, and now honor Thy Word.
 4. There shall be showers of blessing: Oh, that today they might fall,
Now as to God we're confessing, Now as on Jesus we call!

THE WORD (NIV)

Psalm 128

- Blessed are all who fear the LORD,
who walk in obedience to him.
- ²You will eat the fruit of your labor;
blessings and prosperity will be yours.
- ³Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.
- ⁴Yes, this will be the blessing
for the man who fears the LORD.
- ⁵May the LORD bless you from Zion;
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.
- ⁶May you live to see your children's children—
peace be on Israel.

Psalm 127:1-2

- Unless the LORD builds the house,
the builders labor in vain.
Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the guards stand watch in vain.
- ²In vain you rise early
and stay up late,
toiling for food to eat—
for he grants sleep to those he loves.

Matthew 11:28-30

- ²⁸"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

U P – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal

Sermon Study Summary

Pastor Ashwin speaks about family and gives the blueprint of a godly home. In March, he and his wife will complete 10 years of marriage so he speaks on this topic, yet he is still a 'Learner'. As a pastor, he knows problems about marriage, parenting and family are widespread. Christians need to know for themselves what Scripture says about raising a family to be able to help others in need. Statistics show there are problems in marriages and families in the church as well as the world. People are pessimistic about marriage and parenting, wondering, "When things look bleak, what chance do I have to raise a thriving Christian family?" The good news is God is more than capable of changing things. Scripture says marriage and family are institutions ordained and created by God. He delights to bless families so they flourish.

"There is a general assumption prevalent in the world that it is extremely difficult to be a Christian. But this is far from the truth...The easiest thing in the world is to be a Christian. What is hard is to be a sinner." (Eugene Peterson). As a Christian aligned with God, you have Jesus on your side and the resources of heaven available. People without the Lord rely on their own strength and resources. Jesus called them weary and burdened, but His yoke is easy and His burden is light. (Mt 11:28-30) This is true for marriage and family. People who walk God's way receive His blessings. The God of earth and heaven is on our side so we are not dependent on our own efforts alone. God is eager to bless even when family life is not effortless or smooth sailing.

Psalm 128, a Jewish marriage prayer, outlines the blessing for those who fear and obey the Lord. To fear God, is to take Him seriously and walk in His ways. The blessing means happiness, a deep sense of wellbeing and wholeness, an abundant and full life. The question each family has to answer is "Are we in sync with God?"

God blesses such families in these areas:

1. Work (Ps 128:2, 127:1-2) The Bible considers work good, not a burden to endure. God promises to bless our work. The Psalmist does not condone laziness nor compulsive work habits that cause stress and anxiety. In an agricultural society, tilling the soil and planting seeds were futile unless God blessed you with the fruit of your labour. When you give God first place in your family and seek to honour Him, He takes care of you supplying all your needs. (Mt 6:33)

2. Marriage (128:3a) When a man and woman make a marriage covenant centred on Christ, they will be even more productive for God's kingdom. A wife is pictured as a 'fruitful vine'. As a climbing grape vine needs a fence or pole for support to bear fruit, so a wife needs her husband's security and stability to bear spiritual fruit. He is not passive, distant nor uninvolved in the home. God calls a husband to be the spiritual leader in the home/family. Like Joshua, he declares that he and his household will serve the Lord. This includes influencing everyone in his home to follow and serve God—a huge responsibility. It includes taking the initiative in prayer and family devotions, setting the spiritual direction for his family. It includes encouraging words and affirmation that nurture his wife in fruitfulness and her capacity to love. Their marriage and family will flourish when he is a servant leader submitted to God's authority and walking in His ways. This does not mean he is superior; husband and wife are equal but differ in roles and functions. She comes alongside to encourage and help, respecting his authority and responding to his initiatives. She holds him in high regard in word and action and is his cheerleader.

3. Parenting (128:3b) Children are pictured as 'olive shoots around your table' that will become strong olive trees when they are nurtured. Olive shoots take about 15 years to grow into trees. They can produce olives for 1500 years--symbols of longevity and productivity. So too children need tender loving care in an environment of faith for years before they are released to be fruitful. The kitchen table symbolizes family time, hospitality, conversations and family devotions. Parents model their faith in front of their children—passing on their legacy of faith to the next generation.

4. Society (128:5-6) Since families are the building blocks of society, they are vital to healthy cities and nations. When God blesses individual families, that overflows to have an impact in a city and country. God desires to advance His kingdom through families that live out the gospel to the full. When a God-fearing family walks in His ways, their work is blessed, their marriage is blessed, their children are blessed and this spills over into the city and nation. How amazing that generations can be blessed if a family is determined to make a difference for God! How sad that a family alienated from God would forfeit His blessings now and for generations to come!

Psalm 128:4 reaffirms "YES, this will be the blessing for the man who fears the Lord." 'YES' is emphatic; it means look, behold, take notice. YES, God extends grace to those who walk in His ways. YES, when God is the true head of your household and you desire to live according to His precepts, then God grants His blessing.

Using Ezek 34:25-26, a hymn writer wrote "There Shall Be Showers of Blessing." God will make a covenant with His people when they get rid of the "savage beasts"--things that threaten their welfare. Hell's forces try to destroy our homes, marriages, children and families. But when God blesses families, savage beasts must flee. He will SHOWER His people with His peace, rest and Shalom. God SHOWERS His supernatural favour and His unlimited goodness on His own so they will be a blessing to many.