

THE HOUSE THAT GOD BUILDS

Trusting the Lord to build your family

Psalm 127

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Leaving a legacy¹

An American educator, A.E. Winship (1900) decided to trace the descendants of Jonathan Edwards almost 150 years after his death. His findings are remarkable, especially when compared to another man from the same time period known as Max Jukes. Winship's research was based upon a study done by Richard L. Dugdale in 1874, who was employed by the New York Prison Commission to visit the state prisons. As Dugdale visited he was surprised to find criminals in six different prisons whose relatives were mostly criminals or paupers. Dugdale was surprised to discover that these six criminals were all descended from the same family.

This led Mr. Dugdale to study their relatives, living and dead. He studied the court and prison records, reports of town poorhouses, and the testimony of old neighbors and employers. He learned the details of 540 descendants of Max Jukes (the patriarch born about 1720) in five generations. He learned the exact facts about 169 who married into the family and traced others linked to the family bringing the number up to 1,200 persons. Jukes' descendants included: **7 murderers, 60 thieves, 190 prostitutes, 150 other convicts, 310 paupers, and 440 who were physically wrecked by addiction to alcohol.**

A.E. Winship described the family in this way, *"The almost universal traits of the family were idleness, ignorance, and vulgarity. They would not work, they could not be made to study, and they loved vulgarity.... It is very difficult to find anyone who is honest and industrious, pure and prosperous."*

In contrast with the descendants of Max Jukes, Jonathan Edwards, arguably one of the greatest Colonial preachers, theologians and intellects America has ever produced, came from a godly heritage and married Sarah Pierrepont, a woman of great faith. Together they left an entirely different kind of legacy: **1 U.S. Vice-President, 1 Dean of a law school, 1 dean of a medical school, 3 U.S. Senators, 3 governors, 3 mayors, 13 college presidents, 30 judges, 60 doctors, 65 professors, 75 Military officers, 80 public office holders, 100 lawyers, 100 clergymen, and 285 college graduates.** A.E. Winship commends the Edwards family in this way, *"Much of the capacity and talent, intensity and character of the more than 1,400 of Edwards' family is due to Mrs. Edwards."*

These contrasting legacies provide an example of what some call the five-generation rule: *"How a parent raises their child — the love they give, the values they teach, the emotional environment they offer, the education they provide — influences not only their children but the four generations to follow, either for good or evil."*² What a challenging thought! If someone studied your descendants four generations later, what would you want them to discover?

¹ <https://www.ywam-fmi.org/news/multigenerational-legacies-the-story-of-jonathan-edwards/>

<https://thinkgospel.wordpress.com/2014/10/28/the-juke-edwards-story-a-contrast-in-family-legacy/>

² Lawson, Steven. *Holman Old Testament Commentary - Psalms 76-150* (Kindle Locations 7124-7139). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Building your family

As parents, there are many dreams and desires we have for our children that we intensely toil and labor to make happen. We have a desire to keep them safe, protected and guarded against evils. We have dreams of watching them succeed and fulfill expectations we hope for them. We desire their affectionate love and respect as we pour ourselves into their well-being. We hope that somehow they will become smarter and wiser than we were, and in turn become “better” than us by not making the same mistakes we made. When evaluating your own desires, expectations and efforts as parents, in whom is your heart trusting for the growth and success of your family?

“Parenting is not first about what we want for our children or from our children, but about what God in grace has planned to do through us in our children.”³

The simple principle I want to address this morning when it comes to our families is trust. *In whom do you trust the care and outcome of your family to? Are you trusting in yourself, others or the Lord for the outcome?* The principle of trust puts our parenting into perspective as a stewardship. As godly stewards, you are called to be a faithful and responsible care-taker of what He has graciously blessed you with – namely, those entrusted to your family care, your children!

Studying Psalm 127 will reveal to us that the building of your home is to be *entrusted to the Lord entirely*. All the labor, guarding, late nights, early mornings, hard work, effort and performance is worthless if you are not **trusting the Lord to build your family**. As parents we are often acutely aware of our finiteness, lack of knowledge and skill; you wrestle with your sense of identity (“mom”), how you receive value (“obedient kids”) and where you place your hope (“child’s success”). Your value and labor as a parent is only proved useful when you are actively, continually trusting the Lord to build your home.

“Successful parenting is not about what you’ve produced; rather, it’s first about what you have done. Let me say it this way: successful parenting is not about achieving goals (that you have no power to produce) but about being a usable and faithful tool in the hands of the One who alone is able to produce good things in your children.”⁴

Trusting God to build your family means that His work in your children begins with you first. Psalm 127 holds for us **THE KEY TO ENJOYING GOD’S BLESSING IN YOUR FAMILY IS TO BE A FAITHFUL STEWARD OF HIS GRACE ENTRUSTED TO YOU, AS YOU CONTINUALLY ENTRUST YOUR FAMILY TO GOD’S SOVEREIGN CARE.**

³ Paul Tripp, *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles*, p.15

⁴ Tripp, p.19

I. DEPENDING ON GOD TO BUILD YOUR HOME [vs.1-2]

^{CSB} **Psalm 127:1** *A song of ascents. Of Solomon. Unless the Lord builds a house, its builders labor over it in vain; unless the Lord watches over a city, the watchman stays alert in vain. ² In vain you get up early and stay up late, working hard to have enough food - yes, he gives sleep to the one he loves.*

GOD IS YOUR DECISIVE BUILDER

This brief, poignant psalm came from the pen of King Solomon. Solomon was no stranger to large families and observing the affects of parenting decisions, both good and bad. Solomon himself was not the product of the best family dynamic, nor was he an ideal father. However, the wisdom God granted Solomon enabled him to understand things rightly, even if he did not always practice the right thing. I believe this psalm was written toward the end of his life, after he returned to an understanding that life is wasted apart from God. The themes in this psalm are consistent with the book of *Ecclesiastes*. Whether he wrote this psalm as a regret or warning, God's inspired words hold true for you today.

The warning repeated 3x in the first two verses is the word VAIN ("empty, useless, meaningless, or futile"). Solomon stresses that any effort applied, no matter its good intentions, done apart from the Lord is absolutely worthless. It is painful to confess that all our hard work, sleepless nights, early mornings do not matter if God is not at the center of your attempts. Scripture upholds the need for honest work to support your family, and condemns laziness (Gen.3:17; Pro.21:25; 1 Tim. 5:8). Instead, this warning shows the futility of feverish, fretting and fanatical labor by those who are fiercely self-sufficient.

Trusting the Lord to build your family begins by depending on God's work in your home life. The BLUEPRINT for the structure of your home comes from Scripture. The PRINCIPLES which establish your family values are gleaned through diligent study of His word. The ENERGY to do the work, day in and day out, is empowered by the Holy Spirit. **God-centered families are God-blessed families who acknowledge Him as the decisive builder of their home.**

GOD IS YOUR DILIGENT PROTECTOR

Home and family are important in any culture, but particularly in cultures where the strength and safety of the community relies on families within. The rigors of living in an ancient society meant a constant struggle against disease, war and famine. Growing families were needed to replenish and help secure a city from these constant threats. High value was set on the family as the basic unit of society and responsibility.

Just as an ancient city toiled relentlessly to ensure the safety and security of their community, we are also concerned with the safety of our city, neighborhoods, schools, and home. Although the methods of protection have changed over the centuries, the means by which any place is made safe and secure has not. God still stands as Divine watchman and protector over our schools, this church and your house.

It does not mean God will protect all of us from every stray bullet, any distract driver or would-be burglar. It does mean that the only real safety we have in this world is in God alone. You cannot protect your family from every evil danger lurking out there; no amount of police force or legislation passed can prevent wrongdoing. This means His protection is more than our bodily safety, it is the security of your soul (Matt.10:28). *As you pray for the physical safety of your children, are you more urgently pleading for the eternal security of their soul? Both outcomes belong to God, which do you pray most often for?* **Trusting the Lord with your family means that the outcome of your security and protection belong to God alone.**

GOD WORKS SO YOU CAN REST

Hard work may require getting up early and going to bed late, but it is an inferior motive if it is only to provide food, clothing and shelter. "*The bread of anxious toil*" refers to the feverish activity of someone burning the candle at both ends to make provision. This anxious toil is born out of anguish, and never satisfies. "*Anguish is that experience by which work is turned into toil. Human labor under the sun becomes toil when God's blessing is absent.*"⁵

Jesus addressed this issue, "*Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*" (Matt. 6:31-34)

What does this mean for all the hard work you put in every day? It means that you can go to bed each night and truly rest in God's gift of sleep! *How are you sleeping at night?* Which mom in here wouldn't like to be more rested each morning? What dad here needs to turn off their mind to get a good night's sleep? The gift of rest is a wonderful reward God gives to His precious loved ones. It is an inner tranquility and contentment to you who work in humble obedience to the Lord. (Psa.4:8; Prov.3:24)

"Beloved" was the special name God gave to Solomon (2 Sam.12:25). It is also God's term of affection for His children. In contrast to the *vain* and *empty* efforts of our labors apart from God, work done in the strength of God allows you to empty your mind of worry and rest your hands from labor. It's not necessarily *how much* you sleep, as it is *how* you sleep. God delights and calls us to rest in Him! (Matt.11:28-30)

II. DELIGHTING IN GOD'S GROWTH OF YOUR FAMILY [vs.3-5]

^{CSB} **PSALM 127:3** *Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord, offspring, a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons born in one's youth. ⁵ Happy is the man who has filled his quiver with them. They will never be put to shame when they speak with their enemies at the city gate.*

CHILDREN ARE YOUR DELIGHTFUL GIFT

Solomon concludes with the ultimate illustration of God's Divine provision and care for your family. In all our efforts to try and build our homes, careers or family, it is God who blesses. His blessing comes through the gift of children. Children only and always come from God as a reward, which means you can find joy and be happy with your children. The easy, sinful path of many parents is to complain or begrudge their children. Yes, children may be burdensome at times, but they are never a burden to bear. "*Unless men regard their children as the gift of God, they are careless and reluctant in providing for their support.*"⁶

A God-centered family sees their children as a highly valued prize and delight in their growth. Children are not the fruit of chance, but in every circumstance a gift from God as He distributes accordingly. It is why we value the sanctity of life from the point of conception to birth. It is why we support the adoption of children into homes that will nurture with godly love and care. **Trusting the Lord with your family includes delighting in the children He provides.**

⁵ VanGemeren, Willem A. *Psalms* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary) (Kindle Location 27606). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

⁶ Calvin, John. *Calvin's Commentaries Volume XI - Psalms 93-150*. p.111. Baker Books.

CHILDREN ARE YOUR USEFUL HELPERS

The analogy of "*arrows in the hand of a warrior*" envisions a skillful archer who knows how to expertly use his equipment. Such skill requires training, discipline and repetition to be an expert in his field. So in the same way parents are tasked with the responsibility of raising their children. Parents you must work hard to build a loving home, provide biblical instruction, moral correction, consistent discipline, as well as model godliness to your kids. You will get up early, go to bed later and repeat instructions so they will learn how to live in the fear of the Lord. Remain diligent to the duty God has called you to!

No one else can raise your children as God intends for you to do. No one else should raise your children as God has prepared you to do. Although many will try to steal your children from you and God, remember as you strive to protect, it is God who preserves. "*No formula for success is offered, but we are invited to stretch out our hands in trust and submission to ascribe praise to God for the success we do enjoy, recognizing the divine hand in it.*"⁷ **God-centered families must work hard at the stewardship of parenting, while trusting in His sovereign purpose to raise them up into His likeness and service.**

CHILDREN ARE YOUR JOYFUL LEGACY

The final thought is on God's intended happiness for the family through children. God determines the size of the quiver, parents are to be faithful stewards with theirs. The job with any amount of children is a slow, unsung occupation that results in invaluable joy. It is through children that God preserves you, helps protects you against hostile influences, loneliness and abandonment. As parents, you are not to find your identity in your child, but enjoy our legacy through them.

SPIRITUAL LEGACY

Several of you might know the heritage you came from and the legacy you represent. Many of us might have the privilege of seeing our family legacy for a couple generations. None of us will see beyond the 4th and 5th generations. However, we are not to be concerned with our legacy, but with the greater heritage and inheritance we are a part of. God is the builder of His own household, and believers are members of His family, the church. In the same manner God requires us to be faithful stewards in parenting, He calls you to be a faithful steward of the ministry entrusted in the gospel.

We do not build for our own and we cannot protect our own apart from God's decisive work. As we labor together for the gospel of Jesus Christ, may we do it resting in the reality that God is the only designer, protector and active agent to build His kingdom, for His glory. We will do well to remember that God is the **Builder** of the house, the **Bulwark** of the city, the **Booster** of the worker, and the **Blessor** of the family.

⁷ Allen, Leslie C. *Word Biblical Commentary* (Vol.21, Psalms 101-150). p. 240. Thomas Nelson.