

# RETHINKING SUCCESS & SIGNIFICANCE (PSALM 127)

## Psalm 127 ESV

A SONG OF ASCENTS. OF SOLOMON. <sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. <sup>3</sup> Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. <sup>4</sup> Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. <sup>5</sup> Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

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## 1: SUCCESS IS DEPENDENT UPON THE LORD

### Psalm 127:1 ESV

<sup>1</sup> 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.

### SOLOMON IS THE AUTHOR

- He was filled with the wisdom and counsel of the Lord
- The House:
  - Can refer to the 'house of the Lord' or 'the family' – children
  - V1: most likely referring to the "house" - temple of the Lord that David charged Solomon with building.
- The City:
  - In conjunction with the house of the first line... most likely referring to Jerusalem.
- These are certainly 'great' projects or tasks

### SOLOMON'S GREAT TASKS REQUIRE GOD'S BLESSING AND FAVOR

- If anyone knew a roadmap to success, Solomon did.
- Solomon understood and is communicating that ULTIMATE success lies in the Lord's blessing and favor, not our own striving.
  - Striving is required and Solomon speaks much of hard work vs laziness in the proverbs.
- Good projects, great projects even, will come to nothing if the Lord isn't in it.

### Q: HOW DO WE GET GOD'S BLESSINGS AND FAVOR ON OUR WORK-LIFE'S INITIATIVES

- **SIMPLY: follow God's plans NOT beg him to bless ours.**
  - Commit your life to following God and His word.

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- Blessings follow obedience (generally speaking – not dogmatic formula or transactional law)

## **Psalm 37:4 ESV**

<sup>4</sup> Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

- When you follow the Lord and delight in Him
- He puts His desires into your heart
- You want what pleases God – What you want is in alignment with God's heart
- He grants and blesses those desires, because they are His for your life!
- **GENERALLY: steward your gifts for the Lord**
  - Recognize the gifts came from Him
  - Use them for his glory and not your own
  - You can work a secular job as worship unto the Lord and experience God's blessings
- **NOTE:**
  - Motivation has to be right.
  - Great tasks with improper motivations will usually come to nothing in the end (except for the grace of God)

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## 2: CHASING SUCCESS APART FROM GOD IS ULTIMATELY WORTHLESS

### **Psalm 127:2 ESV**

<sup>2</sup> It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

### **SOLOMON ISN'T STATING THAT HARD WORK IS WORTHLESS**

- The proverbs repeatedly emphasize that the wise work hard and in season.
- The fool is a sluggard and sleeps the day away (lifestyle—not appropriate rest).

### **RATHER, SOLOMON IS SAYING THAT STRIVING FOR SUCCESS APART FROM GOD AND RELYING ON SELF IS VANITY**

- The world chases this type of glory and if you can even obtain it... its fleeting and therefore vanity.
- In a word or two... selfish pride

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## WORKING FOR THE BREAD OF ANXIOUS TOIL

- Could also be translated: 'bread of sorrows' or 'bread of pains'
- Its a call back to the curse pronounced upon Adam in the garden ([Gen 3:17-19](#))

### **Genesis 3:17-19 ESV**

<sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; <sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

- Who chased the idea of 'being like god'
- Getting knowledge (good thing) in defiance of God's command (bad thing) – ended terrible
- So those who chase success outside of (independent of) God are toiling night and day, restless, only to eat the 'bread of sorrows'
  - It is bread that doesn't endure or last, thus resulting in pains or sorrows
  - It is success and meaning that seem to always be another step ahead of you, out of reach
  - Or upon tasting it, its not what you imagined it to be... its bitter and not sweet, empty and joyless

## THUS HE GIVES TO HIS BELOVED SLEEP

- Closing this half of the psalm is the idea that God's people can rest and sleep knowing that their labors ultimately rely upon God's blessing and NOT their efforts alone.
- Beloved:
  - Reference to the name Nathan announced to David regarding Solomon (Jedidiah) - beloved
  - Solomon need not stress and worry, eat the bread of sorrows; he can rest knowing that the temple project and the city are under the care of the Lord
    - It's the Lord's project
    - They're the Lord's people
    - His work is in alignment with the Lord's purposes.
      - He is the One actually building the house and keeping the city.

# RETHINKING SUCCESS & SIGNIFICANCE (PSALM 127)

- Solomon can rest knowing that he can only do his part... The Lord must do His part
- Regarding the biblical map to success:
  - i. Love and follow God through a personal relationship with Him.
  - ii. Surrender your heart and commit your ways to His will.
  - iii. Seek His counsel and obey His Word.
  - iv. Work diligently as an act of worship to the Lord.
  - v. Trust His blessing, rest in His provision, and know your limits.

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## 3: A LIFE OF TRUE SIGNIFICANCE

### Psalm 127:3-5 NIV

<sup>3</sup> Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. <sup>4</sup> Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. <sup>5</sup> Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.

### CHILDREN, NOT BREAD, ARE THE HERITAGE AND REWARD FROM THE LORD

- In a stunning twist, the psalm declares that reward and blessing from the Lord is in the children he gives.
- Further, its through building your house (your children) that you can leave a lasting impact—true significance
  - There's a word play in the Hebrew between 'build' (v1) and 'children' (v3) that reinforces the idea that the lasting building is the house the Lord gives you and NOT any temporary success.

### ARROWS IN THE HAND OF A WARRIOR

- Arrows in the ancient world were primarily viewed as an offensive weapon.
- It's how the hunter hunts his prey.
- It's how armies shot over walls and across battlefields.
- Arrows are a long range weapon in the ancient world.
- Children, are like arrows in the hand of a warrior
  - They are launched far beyond what the father could do on his own.

# **RETHINKING SUCCESS & SIGNIFICANCE (PSALM 127)**

- Children (raised by the father and blessed of the Lord) result in generational impact and significance.
- A righteous man, raising righteous children, launched into the world/culture will continue the father's legacy and impact into the next generation.
- A righteous man can impact his own generation, but his sons the next generation, his grandsons the following.

## **ARROWS IN THE QUIVER**

- An arrow wouldn't be placed in the quiver until it was ready for use.
- The father must raise his children and prepare them for the Lord's purposes
- When they have been raised and made ready, they are placed in the quiver, ready to be launched.
- Blessed is the man who has children, raises them right and prepares them for God's purposes.

## **SIGNIFICANT SUCCESS: CHILDREN CARRYING THE FATHER'S LEGACY**

- We often don't think about the culture wars the right way.
  - Too often people say, I don't want to bring kids into a world so wicked. (I understand the sentiment).
- But God's plan is for godly people to have kids and to raise them in the faith and use them to impact generations.

### **Malachi 2:15 ESV**

<sup>15</sup> Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

- I'm excited about the future of Mayville because I believe in the families of CLF.

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## **RESPONSE:**

SUCCESS IS DEPENDENT UPON OUR OBEDIENCE AND GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK A MAN CAN SET HIMSELF TO: RAISING GODLY OFFSPRING

- This too, requires the Lord's blessing and our obedience.