

Harris Creek Baptist Church  
Derek Davidson  
Series: Uncommon Family  
June 12, 2022

Uncommon Parenting  
Psalm 127

**“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.<sup>2</sup> In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves. Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth. 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.”**

Good morning, Harris Creek (audience cheers). Hey, my name is Derek Davidson and I have the privilege of serving on the staff with our student ministry 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. (audience cheers). Come on, this is where the fans are at. So, like JP said we just got back from camp and then they put me up here to preach, so it kind of feels like my MJ flu game for my basketball fans out there really overcoming adversity this morning. But camp was a blast I’ve been doing camps for a long time, but recently I’ve become a parent, so camp has hit a little bit different as a parent.

This is what I looked like most of the week (picture on screen). I was just dragging things along doing my dad duties. And then when I tried to keep up this is what I would look like (new picture on screen). If you can’t tell I am the one in the back doubled over because I’m exhausted. And since becoming a dad, man I’m just going to embrace my dad-ness, I can’t hide it. So, every session we would start with dad jokes. Yeah, I’ll tell you one of my favorites from the week. Why are Saturday and Sunday so strong? Why Derek? Thanks for asking. Because the rest of days are weekdays. I know I hate it too; I’m becoming my father. It’s like those Progressive commercials talk about; I’m becoming my parents as I become a parent.

As I’ve become a parent, I’ve been reflecting on my own parents and how they raised my siblings and I. Some of the things my parents did were uncommon and a little weird. We would sing every night “I will call upon the Lord”, which sounds sweet. I see some of your faces. Aww. No, it wasn’t sweet, we were not the Von Trapps. We are not musical, and we would sing it as a round. It was not sweet. It was not fun.

But there are other things that my parents did that were uncommon that I would look back on now and I’m really grateful. I’m not grateful for the singing but I’m grateful for some of the things my parents did. They placed a lot of restrictions on my siblings and I; they would place restrictions on what we could watch, what we could listen to. We never had video games in our house, we never had cable television in our house which I hated growing up. They also placed restrictions on the activities that we could be a part of. I love sports. I’ve always loved sports. My parents limited me to two sports in a year. And as I reflect back on those restrictions, I did not

like them then but now I realize they were restricting things for our good. My parents always had people over at our house. We had people staying with us, we had people coming over for dinners, people in and out, people that were part of our family that weren't in our family, different backgrounds, different ethnicities, different socioeconomic statuses.

As a kid it was hard. People kind of coming in and out, but now, as I reflect back, I'm really grateful for the legacy of generosity that my parents passed on to my siblings and I. And then lastly, my parents adopted they built their family in an uncommon way. My two younger siblings are adopted. And I've shared this before here, but my wife and I, in January to May 2020 gained four kids into our house and as of three weeks ago, we've adopted all four of them. This is a picture of our family. (Cheers). Yeah. I know. Five beautiful people up there, and then me. But I'm so grateful for my parents living in an uncommon way because our family really started 25 years ago, when my parents decided to adopt.

And I'm not talking about my parents this morning because they were the perfect parents. They certainly were not they would tell you that but there are things that they did very intentionally that were uncommon that affected my siblings and I that pointed us in the right direction.

So, as we're in the series uncommon family, we're going to be talking about parenting this morning. We've talked about motherhood. We've talked about gender identity. We've talked about family baggage. We talked about leaving a legacy to the next generation. And last week we talked about marriage. And we're in this series of uncommon family because the way that we live as Christians should look uncommon to the world around us. From Old Testament prophets to the New Testament, there's this thread throughout Scripture that the people of God are foreigners in this world. We belong to a different kingdom.

Now, I don't know about you, but when I've traveled to different countries, a lot of times I feel like I stand out. I look different. Sometimes I'm a lot taller than the people around me. They speak a different language, there's different customs and different culture. And that's how we should feel in this world. We should always feel like we stand out and our families should look different. Our families should look uncommon, and our parenting should look uncommon as well.

Now, so what are some of the common ways that the world parents. I think sometimes the world talks about kids as if they're a nuisance. You should limit the amount of kids you have, so you can still have the fun that you want to have as a parent. That's how the world talks about kids. Or sometimes the world talks about kids as if we should protect our kids from any hardship that should come their way. We used to have helicopter parents that would hover over and pick them up out of their messes and clean up behind them. And now we have snowplow parents that go in front of their kids remove all hardships from the road ahead. And in the process, make sure their kids aren't prepared for the world that they're going into. And then we also have, our world can just sometimes just neglect children. Either just turn them over to technology or to their friends or just neglect them emotionally and physically. And that's not how we should look as parents. Our parenting should look uncommon to the world around us.

But as we're talking about parenting this morning, I know for a large population here, some of you aren't parents, and I hope you stay with me this morning. One we are opening God's word and every time we open God's word, there's something for us to learn about God and about ourselves. God speaks to us through His Word. And then secondly, as we talked about, parenting, really, we're talking about discipling the next generation and that's a task, that's an activity for all of us to participate in whether we are parents or not. That's the story of Kelly and I, my wife and I's family, we got thrown into the fire of parenting and we've needed all the help that we can get. So, we've had single people, college students, married people without kids over in our house, helping us raise our kids. And really that's the call for all of us; that we all disciple, the next generation. And I know for some of you, you may be here and you're trying to have kids and you can't, or you want a spouse to have kids with and you don't have that spouse. And so, hearing a message on parenting can be hard, but hear me say that we as a church; we see you, we know you, we value you. And even more importantly, God sees you, God knows you, and God values you tremendously. And your life doesn't start when you have kids your life of discipling the next generation starts now.

So, this morning, we're going to be spending our time in Psalm 127. Most of the psalms are written by King David but this one is actually attributed to his son, King Solomon. King Solomon built the temple, but this Psalm is referred to as a Psalm of ascension, which meant that families would say this Psalm, they would read this psalm, or sing this Psalm as they walked to the temple for worship, as they walked there for religious festivals, as they walked there from different places around, as they walked to the city of Jerusalem, as they walked to the temple. And that's the context of the Psalm that we're reading this morning. Psalm 127, starting in verse one:

**“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves. Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth. 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.”**

Our first point today is:

1. *Uncommon Parents Partner with GOD*

Let's look back, just at verses one and two. Solomon says this **“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.”**. And it seems as if Solomon is thinking of two things right here. One

he's thinking of the actual house of God, the temple that he built, the city of Jerusalem unless God is in the temple, unless God is in the city, anything that they do there is in vain. That's the message for us as a church. Unless God is in the work that we are doing here, everything that we do is in vain.

But then, the second thing it seems that he's thinking of is he's thinking of a house of a family of a people. He talks about children later on; it seems clear that that's what Solomon is talking about. So, for us as parents, for us discipling the next generation, unless God is in the work that we are doing everything we do is in vain. We can stay up late, we can rise really, but unless God is in it. Everything we do is in vain. So, the question for us to ask is; Does God care about our children? And the answer is a resounding yes. Scripture is so clear on that.

**Isaiah 54:13** says this, “**All your children will be taught by the Lord and great will be their peace**”. Our children will be taught by God. God will teach them. And then Jesus time and time again esteems children, talks about children, identifies with children. When his disciples Matthew 18 asked who is the greatest in the kingdom of God, and he puts a child right in front of them. And then says this, “**Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me**” **Matthew 18:5**. Man, what a truth that is. That a truth that we can rest on.

God cares about our kids more than we can ever care about them. God works in our kids more than anything that we can ever do. God is in our children. God cares about our children. He will fight for our children. So, what we need to do is we need to make sure the things that we do align with what God is already doing in our kids. And the best way that we can do that is we can partner with God in prayer.

Just to talk about my parents one more time this morning. This is something that my parents have really exemplified in me as I've become a parent. My dad for the last 20 years has had one day of the week that he's designated for his kids that he will pray for them. And every single week since I've had a phone in the last 15 years, he's texted me on Friday asking how he can pray for me. Man, there were seasons in my life that I was a prodigal. There were months I didn't respond to those text messages. But he still faithfully texted me. He still faithfully prayed for me. My mom has told me countless stories of waking up in the middle of the night and just feeling this need that she had to pray for me, and she would contend for me in prayer. And she was right she needed to pray for me. She would call her friends and they would spend hours on the phone praying for me. And those prayers are what I attribute to who I am today. God worked in those prayers.

And as I've thought about my parents it's been convicting for me as I've thought about my own kids. Do I pray for my kids? Do I fight for my kids in prayer? Do I contend for them in prayer? And parents I'm going to ask you the same question; Do you fight for your kids in prayer? Because sometimes I realized I just pray for them when I remember. I'm not spending the time asking God, what does he want for His kids? Because what prayer does is we pray for our kids. It reminds us that God cares for our kids. That God is working and reminds us of the gospel that Jesus has already paid it all for our kids. So, we can rest easy in that and we can let our anxious thoughts flee because God cares about our kids.

And then secondly, what it does is it aligns our heart with God's heart for our children, because sometimes there's things that we want for our kids that God doesn't want for them. Sometimes there's a direction that we are aiming our kids towards, and it's not the direction that God has for them. So, when we pray for our kids, when we spend time talking to God about our kids. He aligns our heart with His heart for His children. Because uncommon parents' partner with God. And we do that because we want to make sure that the things that we're doing aren't in vain, which leads me to a second point,

## *2. Uncommon parents give their children direction*

And what does that mean? It means that we are intentional with the direction we are sending our kids towards. We know the aim; we know the bullseye. Solomon paints that picture for us in verse four; **“Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth”**. See the image that Solomon is painting for us isn't a farmer with a bow and arrows on the side or a child with a bow and arrow just playing in the front yard. No, the image that he's giving us is a soldier, a trained warrior who has spent years with his bow and arrow. He knows how to operate it. He knows how to check for crosswind. He knows how to shoot is straight at the bullseye. And that's how we should be as parents. We should direct our children intentionally towards the bullseye. And that bullseye is to faithfully follow Jesus.

Dale talked about this two weeks ago, the legacy that we want to pass on to our kids is that they would know and love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. That they would love Jesus.

I think we'd all say that. We would all say that the bullseye we want our kids aimed for is to know and love Jesus. But I think if we were honest with ourselves, sometimes we want our kids to know and love Jesus, but we wouldn't mind if they were a great athlete too. We want our kids to know and love Jesus, but we wouldn't mind if they had a 4.0 as well. We want our kids to know and love Jesus, but we wouldn't mind if they were really well liked in their school as well. And the problem with having two targets is you're going to miss one of them. You can only have one bullseye.

I've had the absolute privilege and I mean that, with everything that word means. The absolute privilege of being on staff here with the student ministry for the last seven years. And what I've said behind the backs of the families in this church is that we have incredible families. Truly I am friends with youth ministers all over the country and every time I talk to them, it makes them more grateful for you guys. You guys love Jesus so much. You guys love your kids so much. You guys love this church and love me so much.

But at times I've seen our kids pointed at the wrong target. I've seen sports in school over emphasized, so that identity is placed in performance. I've seen dating relationships in middle school and high school over celebrated. And children/kids/teenagers experiencing massive heartbreak at 13,15, or 17. Heartbreak they never should have experienced. I've seen rising anxiety levels, and I've seen that, more often than not, coming with our students that have had phones and technology and social media from a really young age. And psychology has made it clear that those two things go hand in hand. Sometimes I think we're aiming at the wrong target.

I get it, parenting is so hard. My experiences on staff is with our youth and parenting teenagers so hard. The work of parenting is hard.

I don't have teenagers yet at some point we'll be there. But I have kids ages two to eight years old and our two-year-old Kendall she loves swimming. Well at least I thought she loved swimming until we started swim lessons. Then I realized that she loves swimming with her floaties on with her family. She does not love swimming with Miss Stacy. Because Miss Stacy makes Kendall jump in the pool and doesn't catch her right away. Miss Stacy makes Kendall put her face underneath the water. Miss Stacy makes her kick to the side of the pool and pull herself out. Kendall has spent a lot of her time in swim lessons screaming "Mama, Mama" over and over on the side of the pool. But we've kept her in those swim lessons because we want her safe. We want her to be able to enjoy the water in a safe way because we love her. Now two weeks in she's putting her face underneath the water and she's coming out with her face up saying "I did it! I did it". She's growing, she's learning, and she realizes that what we're doing was for her good.

And the hard work of parenting is doing what's best for our kids. You know it's hard and it doesn't stop at age 2, doesn't stop at age five, doesn't stop at age 12 or 15, it continues. But what if we did it together?

What if we parented in an uncommon way together? What if the restrictions that we placed on our kids were uncommon to the world, but common in this place? What if the way we talked about dating was uncommon in the world, but common in this place? What if the way that we process through the activities our kids join was uncommon in the world, but common in this place?

See, I'm not going to give a bunch of age limits on what I think your kids should do and when they should get certain things because most of that just depends on your child and what's best for them. But what I am going to advocate for is the conversation. These are the exact questions that we should be asking in our life groups. We should be talking as a life group. We should be talking in our life groups. As our kids get closer to the age where they have a phone and ask; "Hey, is this the right time for this? What phone should I get? What restrictions should be placed on it? Hey, our kids want to listen to this artist, is that a good idea? Hey, our teenager wants to start dating, is that a good idea? How do we process through that?"

These are the questions that we should be asking in our life group. As we decided which sports to sign our kids up for or what activities should we sign our kids up for? We should be coming to our life group and talking through the costs both financially and with time. These are the conversations that we should be having in our life group. Some of you may be thinking, I don't want to have those conversations. No one should speak into my parenting but me. What I would tell you is the stakes are too high. The stakes are too high. Uncommon parenting is too hard to do alone. We need to be locking arms with one another as we best shepherd God's kids.

Because make no mistake about it, the world does not want your kid pointed towards the bullseye of faithfully following Jesus. Make no mistake about it the enemy does not want your kid pointing towards the bullseye of faithfully following Jesus. And Jesus cares so much what we do with his children. He says this a Mark 9:42 "**If anyone causes one of these little ones- those**

**who believe in me - to stumble it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea”.** Man, that scares me as a youth minister, man that scares me as a parent. Uncommon parenting is too hard and the stakes are too high for us to do it alone. We need to lock arms as we care for the next generation because these children are given to us as gifts by God. Which leads me to my last point,

### *3. Uncommon Parents see Children as Blessings*

Man, we see kids as blessings. We don't talk through how many kids we can have based on the hobbies that we can continue to do once we have kids. We don't talk through how many kids we can have based on the finances and if we can continue to do what we want to do when we have kids. No, we see children as gifts given to us by God. In verse three Solomon says, **“Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him”.** And then in verse five, **“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.”** This was convicting for me as I was planning this message. Because if I'm honest with you, sometimes the best parts of my day are when my kids go to sleep. Parenting is hard. Four kids, ages two to eight is hard. But we have some families in this church that have really challenged me in this.

We have a lot of families that are serving in our kid's ministry but I was thinking specifically of the Myers, the Odels, the Watsons, who are here multiple services every single Sunday, in here and then serving in the kid's ministry on the other side of the church. They're serving alongside of their kids. They're teaching their kids that children are blessings, and that their discipleship is some of the greatest work that they can be a part of.

We have families in this church that are quick to offer up their homes for students. And some of them are even willing to host middle school boys, which is uncommon (audience laughs) because they see those children, those teenagers, those students as blessings, and they see their discipleship as some of the greatest work that they can be a part of, and a part of their legacy. So, there's a part of the chapter we haven't really talked about yet in verse five. Solomon says, they will not be put to shame. They being parents, **“They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.”**

Some of your translations may say gate and that's the literal translation of that word court, is the gate. The gate of the city is where people would go, the leaders would go to discuss the town. They would discuss the families, they would discuss what needed to change, and if someone had an accusation to bring against someone, they would bring it there, and they would literally hold court at the gate.

So, the picture that Solomon is painting for us is if someone brought a character charge against a parent, their children could be brought in as expert witnesses to contend for them in court. Now, I'm not talking about the behaviors of our kids, some prodigals come from the most faithful families. What I am talking about is our kids are character witnesses about what we prioritize, about what we say, about what we do, and that is convicting for me. What would my kids say about the amount of time I spend on my phone versus the amount of time I spend in intentional conversation with them. What would your kids say about that? What would our kids say about

how much we prioritize their spiritual maturity versus their grade point average or their points per game average? This is a message for us as a church. What would our kids say here, about what we prioritize as a church? If you brought the children of this church in front of here, what would they say about what we prioritize, about where we give our time, and where we give our energy. Are we quick to serve them or do we assume someone else will do it? Because do you know how a church becomes a dying church? When there's no one of the next generation in it. When we don't prioritize the next generation, churches become dying churches and let that never be the case here at Harris Creek. The next generations discipleship is some of the greatest work that we can be a part of because these children are gifts given to us by God.

So today, as we talked about uncommon parenting. We've talked about how uncommon parents partner with God. Uncommon parents give their children direction. They point them towards the bullseye of faithfully following Jesus and not in any other direction. And then we've talked about how uncommon parents see children as a blessing. Uncommon churches see children as a blessing.

Like I've talked about, and JP talked about, we just got back from camp. In the last night of camp, I stood in front of our students and I just shared the burden that I felt for them. Being a kid is hard, being a teenager is hard, being a student is hard, it's always been hard. You have all the normal complexities of development, processing through identity trying to figure yourself out and then you throw everything that our world has on top of that. All the complexities of 2022; social media, technology, identity, the politics of the day, violence. Our students are processing through so much and it's hard. It was a night that honestly, I've never been a part of before. It's a top five night in my time on staff and my time in ministry, because our students just started crying, almost all of them, and I'm talking like 12-year-old boys. Twelve-year-old boys don't cry over anything. Fifteen-year-old boys, 17-year-old boys, and the girls they were crying with each other, praying for each other, on each other's shoulders because they feel that too. It's hard.

What I told them is that we want this church, our ministry, we want it to be the safest place in the world. That they can come to us with anything that they're processing through, any questions, any doubts, any messes of life, any hardships, and we will help them peace through anything that they're holding and faithfully point them towards Jesus.

Church, they need us. They need us. They need a church that will fight for the next generation. That we would fight for them in prayer. That we'd help them avoid the pitfalls that they can avoid, and we would help them navigate the twists and turns of this world that they need to navigate. Church, they need us because I believe when someone writes a story of this church, one of the biggest chapters of that story will be how we care for the next generation. When they write the stories of our families, it will be how did we care for the children in our midst? I think when God holds us accountable as a church, He will ask; what did you do with my children? I think when He holds me accountable, He will ask me; what did I do with His children?

My prayer for myself and my prayer for our church, is that He would say well done my good and faithful servant. Let me pray that it's true for me and that's true for all of us.



God, thank you for your grace. I... gosh, I have not been perfect as a parent I've not been perfect as a minister, thank you for your grace and thank you that shame is never from you. Any shame that we're experiencing right now is never from you God because you are full of grace and full of love. And any work that we do in discipling the next generation we do right alongside of you because you care for them more than we ever could. You are working harder than we ever could. And really, we're just partnering with the work that you've already done 2000 years ago on the cross God. Thank you for your grace in my life. Thank you for the grace in the life of this church. Thank you for your presence. God we trust you. You're good. Amen.