

What God Can Do for Your Family Psalm 127

The family has been taking a lot of heat lately. There are people who say the family is obsolete, that it's out of date, that we should forget even the idea of the family. But the family is not finished, it's just fragmented and it's fragile. It needs to be strengthened. God introduced Himself to the world through a family.

Family is God's imagination unleashed. We are brought into this world through a family. The shepherds and the wisemen all came to see the baby in the context of a family. Jesus was introduced to the world through a family that struggled financially. They offered only turtle doves at the sacrifice, which was the offering of the poor. We can identify with that.

A happy and healthy home is one of the best places on earth, while an unhappy and unhealthy home is one of the most miserable places. What can God do for my family?

1. God Can Help Me BUILD My Family.

"Unless the Lord builds the house..." Psalm 127:1

David isn't talking about constructing a shelter. He's talking about establishing a family. David is saying, in effect, "God can help you BUILD your family."

"... its builders labor in vain" Psalm 127:1

In other words, if you want a home that will last, then turn to the Master home-builder: God Himself. God invented the family. He knows what will work and what won't work. He can help fix whatever problem your family encounters.

A story is told of Henry Ford. One day he and his wife were driving in the country and came across a man whose Model T had broken down. He was under the hood trying to figure out what was wrong, when Mr. Ford asked if he could take a look. In just a few minutes, Mr. Ford had the Model T running. The owner was amazed and said, "I'm impressed with your knowledge of Model T's, and I'm amazed that you fixed it so easily." Mr. Ford replied, "I ought to be able to fix it because I'm the one who DESIGNED it." And dear people, that's how it is with God and the family. God says, "I can fix it because I designed it!"

The Bible is best family manual, marriage manual, and parenting manual on the market. It has withstood the test of time and it has millions of satisfied customers. So you'd be wise to heed what it says about the family and put it into practice. Be wise!! Make a commitment to listen to what God says about the family and ask Him to help you put it into practice. Follow His instructions and He will help you BUILD your family.

What does Psalm 127 tell us about building healthy strong families? If we are going to have a healthy family, we must:

- Surrender

Make Christ the Center of Your Home.

The building of a house can refer to the actual construction of a dwelling, or the creation of a family (Deuteronomy 25:9). Building a physical house without giving proper attention to the foundation is a recipe for disaster. Attempting to build a family without the Lord also leads to frustration and futility. The Lord must "build" our homes.

Place God First.

It means that the Lord must be first in our lives. The very first command in the ten commandments is to put God first. *"You shall have no other gods before Me"* Exodus 20:3 A "god" with a little "g" is anything that comes before the real God. If we place anything before God, we are getting our house out of order, and we are setting the stage for collapse, confusion, and frustration.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."* Matthew 6:33 Jesus was basically saying the same thing, "Put Me first!" When you do that, everything else falls into place, "these things shall be added to you." What "things" is Jesus referring to? He's referring to all of the "things" that we spend all of our time trying to obtain. The basic things of life like food and shelter, but also those intangible things that we seek to possess. ...things like peace, joy, happiness, contentment, satisfaction in life, a good family.

- Sharing time

Most of our problems are because we are moving too fast for too long. We live in a perpetual state of motion and chaos. We need regular unhurried conversations, Our date nights can look like management meetings. It's a problem because of schedules. Most bad financial decisions are because we are tired and in a hurry. Marketers know the most vulnerable time is 9 pm to 10 pm. "Don't miss the last sale of the day."

The speed of results. The speed of life. The speed of performance.
For most of us, we do life on the run.

The speed of relationships. The speed of love. This is the speed of family.

When you get home from life what does the speed limit say? The speed in my neighborhood is 25 mph because there are children there. Do you know how to slow down? You can microwave a lot of things in this world, but you can't microwave family. We can get an hour workout in 10 minutes now. We have figured out everything fast. A fast food family bypasses all the flavor, taste, and nutrition. You can't have a Ruth's Crist family on a McDonald's pace. Some of us are wired for speed, and we are good for the speed of life, but we struggle with the speed of family. If all I know is how to gear up and not gear down and slow down, I will miss the most important part of being with my family. Children have to be raised at the speed of a walk. Family is where we learn the most basic skills of life. You learn how to walk, how to talk, how to eat, how to use a TV remote -- basic skills that you have to have in life. God wants your family to be a learning center.

"Then our sons in their youth will be like well-nurtured plants, and our daughters will be like pillars carved to adorn a palace." Psalm 144:12

The Bible calls the family a garden for growing people. You grow, and the rest of the family grows too.

"Fathers, do not provoke your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."
Ephesians 6:4

A lot of parenting is simply knowing which end of the child to pat. The head or the rear.

Family moves children through three stages. You want to move them:

From: Parent control

To: Self-control

To: God's control

You move them from parent control where you have to tell them what to do, to self control -- they know what to do, to God control where they're asking "Father, what do You want me to do with my life?" That's what training is all about.

What we learn from our family:

We learn relationships from our family.

Right or wrong, good or bad, you learned how to relate to people from your family. If you don't learn the right way of relating, you're going to learn the wrong way of relating in families. Our happiness in life is often determined by how we get along with people. If you can't get along with people, you're going to be miserable in life. We need to model good relationships for our families. We must show them that it takes honesty to make a relationship work, that it takes vulnerability to make a relationship work, that relationships don't just happen, it takes energy and effort and that you've got to have a lot of forgiveness if you're going to make a relationship work. Are you teaching them how to get along with people who are different from them? Are you modeling for them how to resolve conflict? Or do you just hide it and deny it and pretend it just doesn't exist?

We learn character in the family. Character is more caught than it is taught. You can't help but be influenced by your parents, whether you want to or not. My kids are going to pick up good character from me, or they're going to pick up bad character. I make the difference, the choice, and you do too.

We learn values in the family. We learn what's really important in life. You learned about the value of money, sex, relationships, failure, success. You learned either how to tackle problems head on or how to run from them in denial. You learned how to either face life or flee from life. You're teaching values to your family, either intentionally or unintentionally.

"One generation makes known your faithfulness to the next." Isaiah 38:19 Your family is a relay of values from one generation to the next. You are just a link in a long, long chain. The person you are was influenced by the way your parents were raised, and by the way their parents were raised, and by how their parents were raised... The way I train my children is going to influence the way they train their children and that will impact the way they train their children. You choose the legacy you're going to leave for your children and their children and their children. I have heard many people say. "I'm not going to impose my spiritual values on my kids. I'm going to just let them make their own decision." If you don't communicate values to your children, someone else will.

"These commandments, impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Deuteronomy 6:6-7

How are you doing with the speed of family?

- Sacrifice

In the Bible, Joseph was willing to disadvantage himself for the sake of someone else, which may be one of the reasons he was chosen to raise Jesus in the family. He appears to take his share, but hides it and has Mary sit to ride the animal that will carry her to Bethlehem. This demonstrates the righteousness of Joseph. He would disadvantage himself. The success of family is always on the basis of sacrifice.

Every time a family is succeeding, someone is secretly and silently sacrificing for that success. Someone is hiding the bread. When a family is breaking and fragmenting, it is because someone is secretly and silently being selfish. If your perspective is about you getting what you deserve in the family, it will eventually break your family. We tend to focus on what we get out of family. We should ask, "What did we put into our

family?" You are either silently sacrificing, or you are silently selfish. It may not be apparent, but the affects will be obvious.

You can see the same thing in a church family. We reach lives every day because people disadvantage themselves to serve others. It's true of a nation. When a nation works, it's because a group of people are secretly sacrificing. It's no accident that we are where we are a nation because a group of people are secretly advantaging themselves.

- Spirituality

What is happening in your family's soul? Do my children have a centered soul? Do have they have peace in their soul? Are they at peace with who they are and where they are in life?

Listen for their worship ethic.

What do you pursue? What do you chase? What are they in love with? Do they have a living relationship with Jesus?

Listen for their worth ethic. Where do they get their value from?

May there be an infusion of your grace and peace. May we fight for family. I pray for people whose silent selfishness is hurting the family.

2. God Can Help Me PROTECT My Family.

"Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain." Psalm 127:1

A city is a group of families who live close together. The word "watches" means to guard, protect, and save lives. So David is saying, in effect, "God can help you PROTECT your family." The family needs God's protection in today's world. Not only does your family need protection from burglars and prowlers, it also needs protection from evil spiritual forces. You see, the Devil and his demons would love nothing more than to break up and destroy your family. What are some of the weapons they use against the family?

The family is a shelter in storms. A lot of people think the family is just a bed and breakfast place. A tax deduction. the Bible says far more than that, the family is a shelter from storms. We all have tough days. We all get rained on. We all go through bad weather. There are days when things don't work out right. We all need a place of protection, peace, and refuge from the storms of life.

"Reverence for the Lord gives a man deep strength. His children have a place of refuge and security." Proverbs 14:26 The family is meant to be a place of refuge and security.

There are emotional, physical, relational, and financial storms. Three storms that that you need a family to help make it through:

- Change

We live in a time of rapid change. There is a home stress scale that says the more change you have in your life, the more stressed you are. We need a place of stability, safety, and relaxation that we can count on. when storms of change come.

- Failure

Nobody always wins in life. We all make mistakes. We all stumble. Sometime you fail the test. Sometimes you get fired. Sometimes you get passed over. Sometimes you go bankrupt. Failure is a lot easier to handle when you come home to hugs and encouragement. If there's somebody there to put their arms around you and say, Home is a place where we hear encouraging words like, "We're going to make it!"

- Rejection

Probably the most difficult of all storms.

It hurts to be criticized. It hurts to be attacked. This is especially true for kids. Some of the most painful memories we have come when we were a child, and you can even still remember them today. The thought of that childhood brings back the fears, the guilt, the shame, the hurt, the sense of feeling rejected. Kids can be ruthless with other kids. If you don't believe in the sin nature, become a grade school teacher. Kids say the most awful things to each other. If children don't have any positive reinforcement at home, they're going to believe what other children say about them. Teenagers especially go through that difficult stage of acceptance and rejection.

3. God Can Help Me PROVIDE for My Family.

"In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves." Psalm 127:2

God doesn't send food down from heaven like He did for the Israelites so long ago. He tells us to provide for our families by earning a good honest living. Verse 2 describes Two types of fathers who try to provide for their families. The first father can't sleep at night because he isn't content with what he has. He works long hours in order to provide his family with the luxuries of life. The second father can sleep at night, not because he's lazy, but because he's content with what he has. He works in order to provide his family with the necessities of life - and he's content with that.

4. God Can Help Me PARENT My Family.

Verse 3 describes the value of children . . .

"Children are a heritage from the LORD. Offspring are a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth." Psalm 127:3-4

They are a heritage, not a hindrance; a blessing, not a burden. There is no such thing as an unwanted child - only unfit parents. The feminist movement says, "Children will cramp your style. They'll keep you from pursuing your career and being somebody." And a lot of men argue, "Children are too expensive. If I have children, then I might not be able to drive the kind of car I want to, or live in the kind of house I want to, or take the kind of vacations I want to. After all, children make a rich man poor." Wait a second, sir. You have it backwards. Children don't make a rich man poor. They make a poor man rich! You can't take any of your money to heaven, but you can take all of your children to heaven - if you'll lead them to Jesus. That's the value of children.

Somebody asks, "When should I start teaching values to my child?" When they are young and impressionable. Verse 4 gives a good analogy. When does a warrior influence his arrow the most? When he holds it in his hand. The best time to start teaching your child Godly values is while they are very young - while they're still very

impressionable. Somebody else asks, "What's the best way to teach values to my children?" The best way to teach your child is by being a Godly example. Teach your child the Bible with your lips and back it up with your life - and it will make an impression on their young hearts.

"I put You first in my life, and I ask you to help me build, protect, provide, and raise my family."

5. God Can Help PROSPER My Family.

"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." Psalm 127:5