

Family Dedication Sunday (5/17/15)

Let God Build Your Home

Psalm 127:1-5

Intro: I read this week about a little girl and her mother discussing the Children's Church theme on the way home from church one Sunday. The girl talked all about Jesus going up to heaven and that He is now sitting beside God. The little girl talked about all the things that God had made; the animals, the trees and the moon. Then she said, *"And just think, Mommy, God did it all with his left hand."* Mom replied, *"What do you mean? Can't God use both of His hands?"* The girl declared, *"Of course not, Mommy, they told me in Children's Church that Jesus was sitting on the right hand of God!"*

Note: This is a very special Sunday because we are going to talk about something else God made, and is still making right here, all over this church. Today, I am going to show you how God is the ultimate builder of something more important than the moon, the animals and the trees. God is the master builder of our homes and families! And, in conclusion, you will get the opportunity to see multiple families from our church take a public vow of commitment to let God continue to build their homes and families.

"Anybody can build a house, but only God can build a home." **James Merritt**

Read Text & Prop: Let God Build Your Home in 3 Steps: Psalm 127:1-5

I. Let God Construct, Protect & Sustain Your Home – 1-2

Note: Let's go ahead and state the obvious: Families were God's idea! It was God who gave the first woman to the first man and it was God who gave the first child to the first parents. If there is anything God wants us to get right in this life other than our personal relationship with Him, it's our families!

"The life of a nation is the life of the family writ large." **Plato**

"The problems of America are the family problems multiplied a million-fold."
Dwight D. Eisenhower

"It's harder to lead a family than to rule a nation." **Chinese Proverb**

Note: Letting God build your home requires that you relinquish control of it. It requires a re-organization of priorities, a re-allocation of time and a re-structuring of the chain of command in your home.

What is At Stake? If Solomon (wisest man ever) is correct, then our attempt to build our house apart from God's plan is useless. The psychologists and books that advocate for some other standard for a home will never work.

"Through wisdom a house is built," **Proverbs 24:3**

Trans: Healthy families are not built by accident; they are not the result of superior genes or good luck. God constructs, protects & sustains them!

II. Value God's Blessing on Your Home – 3

"Before I got married I had six theories about bring up children. Now, I have six children and no theories." **Anonymous**

Note: Heritage = property/possession: Children are the property of the Lord! Gracie, Eli & Charlie are not really my children, they are on loan from God. They are His property and His possession. **This means:** There is no such thing as an unwanted child. There maybe unexpected children, but there has never been an illegitimate child. God formed every single one of them in their mother's womb and claims them as His own!

"When God sees that in this poor old world a wrong needs righting or a truth that needs preaching, or a benefit needs inventing – He sends a baby into the world to do it." **F.W. Boreham**

A Step Further: Not only are children God's property on loan to parents, but they are also called our reward! Children are not merely a result of a one-time biological couple, a tax deduction, another chair at the table or some nuisance. They are far more than that!

"To put it in perspective, it took God six days to create the world. It takes nine months to design a child." **James Merritt**

Trans: If you are going to let God build your home, you must let God construct, protect and sustain your home as well as value God's blessing!

III. Submit to God's Design for Your Home- 4-5

Note: This is the point I want to spend the remainder of my time on today because this is the one that I struggle with the most, and you probably do to.

"Could I climb the highest place in Athens, I would lift my voice & proclaim; Fellow citizens, why do you turn & scrap every stone to gather wealth, & take so little care of your children to whom one day out must relinquish it all?"
Socrates

When it comes to kids, I always thought all you needed was love. I thought if you loved your kids that would be enough to raise them to be healthy, happy & wise. I was terribly wrong and I'll show you how.

Arrows: Solomon compares children to arrows. I am not an archer and I've only shot a bow a handful of times, but I know enough to know that not everybody can make an arrow do what he or she wants. The ability to direct an arrow, so that it accomplishes what the archer has in mind, assumes quite a number of things, not the least of which is discipline on the part of the archer. Before the archer can master the arrows, he must first master himself. Godly children are usually the result of Godly parents! It matters...

Things you can't take with you to heaven: wealth, house, bank accounts, car, boat, motorcycle, golf bag, successful business, career, education, etc. However, you get to take your children to heaven for eternity!

Question: Where does an archer get his arrows? They don't grow on trees, do they? The raw materials may come from a tree, but before it can become an arrow...it is merely a plain old stick! Children are not born as arrows they are born sticks. God loans us our kids to make them into arrows and point them in the right direction. This is our primary job as parents: turning sticks into arrows! Let me unpack this idea:

- **I must Prepare my Arrows for Life:** The only way our kids will learn basic life skills is if we teach them. From shoe tying to car driving, we've got to teach them life skills.
 - **Relationships:** Parents teach & model relationships. How you relate to your spouse, friends, coworkers, church, neighbors and others will determine it.

"Jesus increased in wisdom & stature, & in favor with God and men" Lk 2:52

- **Character:** It is more caught than taught.
- **Values:** Where do kids learn about money, time, sex, work, play, success, failure? From the "archers."

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You (Not the government, schools or church...YOU) shall (not "should" or "ought"...MUST) teach (continually teaching, always teaching) them diligently to your children," Deuteronomy 6:6-7a

Objection: I'm not going to impose my spiritual values on my kids. I'll let them grow up & then decide for themselves. **Translation:** I'm going to let the wacko's on twitter, instagram & facebook impose their worldview on my kids!

- **I must Protect my Arrows in Storms:** Life is tough; you get beaten up at school, in sports, with friends, etc. Home is a place of protection & peace! There will be storms of Failure & Rejection. How do I make my home a shelter for my family (Kay Warren)? **Hear, Hug, Hope, Help!** (Note on divorce)
- **I must Play with my Arrows for Fun:** Your family is not supposed to look like the beginning of the Sound of Music with the whistles & marching in unison. Learning & discipline are important...but FUN is just as important! Laughter is a sign of a healthy family! My kids aren't impressed with my degrees, size of my church or the books I write, but they squeal when I close my eyes & start counting!

"Be joyful in the LORD's presence, together with your children," Deut 16:11

- **I Must Point my Arrows to God:** The best way I can do this is to model it daily. It is more effective for them to see mom & dad face financial struggles but trust God with them, handling grief/loss with faith, remain self-controlled when things aren't going well, etc. We model Christ-centeredness!

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Proverbs 9:10

Illus: A pastor was talking to a bunch of kids in children's church one day & asked, "Why do you love God?" He got a variety of answers, but the one he liked the best was from a little boy on the front row who said, "I don't know why I love God, Pastor. I guess it just runs in my family."

Main Idea: There is nothing that a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother, sister, teacher, pastor, friend or neighbor could possibly do that's more important than pointing kids to Jesus as their Savior and Lord!

Illus: I could spend time going off on those parents who never tell their kids about Jesus, take them to church or pray with them. However, that is not the temptation of most of us in this room. Most of us in this room are more tempted to do something even more dangerous to our children than never telling them about Jesus or taking them to church. The temptation for most of us is to inoculate our children from the Gospel. **You know how inoculation (vaccination) works;** a doctor will inject into you (or your kids) a dead strain of a dangerous disease and the body responds by developing antibodies to fight that particular disease so that if it ever is infected with the actual disease the body is capable of fighting off because it is prepared. Inoculation is brilliant for smallpox, but tragic with the Gospel.

How do people inoculate their children from the Gospel? By injecting them with a dead strain of the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ. These parents never let their kids see in them a fervent, passionate, faithful, burning, hot, blazing love for God, they only see the dead version of Christianity in the parents who care more about a good report card than a child who knows and loves Jesus. A kid gets inoculated to the Gospel when their family will mortgage the house, alter work schedules and travel around the country for their little league/cheer/band activities but can never find the money, the time or the desire to take them on a mission trip to share the Gospel with someone in poverty. A kid gets inoculated to the Gospel when his or her parents will spend hours teaching them how to throw a baseball/play an instrument/answer a math problem but spends very little time praying with them/reading the scripture together/serving others with them. I'm not against t-ball, but I am against parents inoculating their children to the Gospel by presenting to them a Christianity that doesn't change your life!

Conclusion: If God is going to build your home, you've got to let God construct, protect and sustain your home, value God's blessing on your home and submit to God's design for your home! And there is a lot at stake:

"One generation makes known your faithfulness to the next." Is 38:19 (LB)

You are a link in a long, long chain. The future generations desperately need us to let God build our homes so that the Gospel will continue it's life-changing work long after we are off the scene.

Move to the Family Dedication Portion of the Service: Ashley will take her place to sing, "I can give you Jesus." & the families will take their place for the family dedication.

Parents & Children Enter– Line up at the stairs to the stage.

Introductions of Parents & Child – One family at a time will join me on the stage. Parents will introduce extended family at this time. After introduction, families will spread out on the carpet in front of the stage so each is visible for the ceremony.

PARENTS, I call your attention to **Deuteronomy 6:4-7**:

*"Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. **Impress them (Sharpen & Repeat) on 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."*

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

PARENTS, love God with every ounce and fiber of your being and teach your children to do the same. As you love God, one another, and others, you will model before the little one a wonderful love for God that they will want for themselves.

Parents Vow: Families by coming forward before God and His people, do you hereby declare your desire to dedicate yourselves and this **Child** to the Lord? If so, please respond by saying "we do." ("We do.")

Having come freely, I ask now that you enter into the following commitment in the presence of God and his people). *So that (CHILD) may walk in the abundant life that Christ offers, do you (PARENTS) vow by God's help and in partnership with the church, to provide (CHILD) a Christian home of love and peace, to raise them in the truth of God's word and discipline, and to encourage them to one day trust Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord? ("We do.")*

Church Family's Vow: Finally, I ask that the church make a vow as well. There's an old proverb that says, *"It takes a village to raise a child."* Parents have first responsibility. But parents need the help and support of the community. So I direct my question now to the church. Would you please stand? Having come freely, I ask now that you make the following commitment to those who stand before you: *So that (CHILD) may walk in the abundant life that Christ offers, do you vow by God's help, to be faithful in your calling as members of the body of Christ, to help (PARENTS) be faithful to God, and to help teach and train (CHILD) in the ways of the Lord so that they*

might one day trust Him as Savior and Lord? If you accept this responsibility, please respond by saying "we do."

Time of Prayer & Commitment