

The House That God Builds
Psalm 127
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Well, I know that you mothers love your children, and I know that you enjoy them most of the time. But being a parent (if we're honest with ourselves – being a mother, being a father, being a parent) can be a very challenging occupation. At times, our children, who bring us so much love and joy and enjoyment, can also bring us consternation. I was reminded this week of the mother who invited some people over from her church for dinner. And, as they gathered around to partake of the meal, she asked her six-year old to say the blessing for the meal.

She responded, “Well, Mom, I don’t know exactly what to say.”

And she said, “Well, that’s alright honey.” She said, “Just say what you hear mother say.”

And so, they all bowed their heads, and the little girl began: “Lord, why on earth did I invite all of these people over for dinner?”

The other story I heard this week was about a boy named Jason who was coming home from the dedication of his younger brother at church. And as they were driving home, he just broke into tears, and he begins sobbing uncontrollably. And the parents turned around and said, “Son, what is the matter?”

And he said, “Well, Mom and Dad, didn’t you hear what the preacher said?”

They said, “Well, yeah, son. But what exactly is troubling you?”

And he said, “Well, the preacher said he wanted us all to grow up in Christian homes, but I want to stay with you.”

Being a parent is definitely not for sissies. I remember when Sheila was pregnant with our first child. There’s just so much to learn. You start with the childbirth classes. And I won’t go into a description, but there were a number of memorable moments in the childbirth classes, I remember. Some of you do as well.

And then you go into the gadgets. You practically need an additional degree to learn how to operate all of the gadgets that now go with parenting. I did learn one very easily though. It's my favorite gadget and that is the Diaper Genie.

But there are all of these things you must learn, and that's before you get to (really the essence of) what it means to be a parent, to direct and shepherd that little life. But when you look at all of the things that are involved, while all of those things are helpful, at the end of the day there is really only one essential ingredient, one quality that is essential to being a successful parent, and it's found in Psalm 127. And I want us to look at this psalm this morning – Psalm 127. Solomon writes:

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in His sleep. Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they will not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.

Verses 3 - 5 are often quoted pertaining to children and to parenting. They obviously have as their point of reference the issue of children. But in reality, this entire psalm deals with the issue of parenting. In fact, the Jews recited it as part of a thanksgiving service after childbirth. It was a reminder of the responsibilities and the privileges that go with being a parent. Its theme and the key quality of being a successful mother or a successful parent is not an activity; rather, it's an attitude. It's an attitude of dependence on God. And as you flow through these few verses, you see this attitude of dependence expressing itself or demonstrating itself in two very specific ways. And I want to look at those ways with you this morning.

We're going to begin by looking at the last three verses, verses 3 - 5. And here, we're going to see that this dependency toward God demonstrates itself in this way: acknowledging that children are from the Lord, acknowledging that children are from the Lord. Notice again, beginning in verse 3,

Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth.
How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be
ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate.

You'll notice in verse 3 children are referred to by two very interesting words. They are a gift, and they're a reward. The Hebrew word translated "gift" is used over two hundred times in the Old Testament. It's a very common word, but it's usually translated "inheritance". It's often used to refer to the land the Israelites received as an inheritance. You see, this word describes a gift from a father to his sons, to his children. An inheritance was a gift. Children are God's inheritance to us. They're God's gift to us.

He also uses the word "reward". That's a very interesting choice of a word. It usually is translated "wages". Now that doesn't mean that children are a wage we earn, although with some of you that may be true. You know, if you have particularly bad children, it may be, you know, poetic justice because of how you treated your own mom and dad, but that's not the sense here of what he's saying. Children are a reward or wages, not in the sense that we earn our children, but in the sense that we receive them, they're a gift to us, from someone who's over us – a gift and a reward.

You see, we tend to think of child-bearing as just a physiological process. We think in our twenty-first century mindset that we have it all worked out, and we understand exactly what it's all about and it's all about just physiology. Instead, God says it's about My direct involvement.

We see this continually throughout the Scripture, but we see it graphically I think in the life of Jacob. Turn to Genesis 30, Genesis 30. I want you to see this in the life of Jacob. You'll remember the contention that was between the two sisters that Jacob had married. And chapter 30, Genesis 30:1, it says: "Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, 'Give me children, or else I die.'"

Now that's quite an interesting position to be in if you're the husband. Notice Jacob's response, verse 2: "Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, 'Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?'" You see, Jacob understood that children or the fact that there are no children is an expression of the will of God. He

understood that God is intimately involved in this process. He gives and He withholds as He chooses.

A few chapters later in Jacob's life, you see the opposite. Not only does God withhold, He also gives. Genesis 33. You'll remember that Esau returns and "... Jacob lifted up his eyes and [verse 1 says] ... behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him." [And so, he becomes concerned, and he eventually comes to meet his brother.] Verse 4,

... Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. [And then Esau] ... lifted up his eyes and he saw the women and the children, and [he] said [to Jacob,] "Who are these with you?" So ... [Jacob] said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant."

You see, children are expression of the will of God and the purpose of God. God is intimately involved in deciding how that happens.

In fact, I'm reminded of Solomon. Solomon here in Psalm 127 writes about children being a gift from God. He uses the Hebrew word for "sons" which is a generic word but can also speak specifically of male offspring. And in Solomon's case, he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, but the Bible records that he had only one son, Rehoboam - one son. God does as God chooses. He says they are a gift, they are a reward, they are God's good gift to us.

Now, what are some of the ways in which children are gifts to us? Well, Solomon chooses one here in Psalm 127. He chooses one that he wants to point out to us. Notice, he says that children are "like arrows in the hand of a warrior". Now it's hard for us to appreciate that because of the times in which we live. If someone attacks your family, what do you do? You pick up the phone, you call 9-1-1, and you ask for the police to come. If someone invades our land, you expect the Army to defend you.

But it wasn't always so. In the ancient world, there was much more dependence on the individual families because you may or may not be able to count on support from outside your own family. And really that's been true until the last hundred years or so. As a man aged, he depended more and more for these things like support and defense on his children; so therefore, the more, the better. So, verse 5 says: "How blessed is the man

whose quiver is full of them.” Some, like my parents, (I’m the last of ten children) need to shop for a bigger quiver. But how happy is the man whose quiver is full.

Verse 5 continues, “They will not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gates.” What’s that about? Well, someone who has many sons is much less likely to be wrongly deprived of his right to the justice due him. Unfortunately in that society as even still today, those who were more helpless, more defenseless like widows and the aged, they are often taken advantage of. They have no one to protect them. Not so the man with faithful children. You see, now we protect them, but the day will come when they will protect us.

Now what about couples to whom God didn’t give children?

I need to address this because this is a question that often comes up when you come to a text like Psalm 127. Sheila and I were married ten years before we had children. In fact, we thought we would not be able to have children before God brought along our three daughters. And so, we had to deal with the issue of what does that mean. Let me say to you that if you’re in that situation, and God has not permitted you to have children, that is not God’s second plan for you. That is His first and best plan for you.

God has something else in mind for you. Perhaps it’s adoption, perhaps it’s simply a life devoted to ministry and pouring yourself out for others. But it’s not the second step down on the plan. It’s God’s best and greatest plan for you. Take whatever reasonable and ethical steps you can. But in the end, you must trust in God’s providence, in the wisdom of His providence. And don’t settle. Instead, accept it as God’s perfect plan.

But there’s a broader lesson in this. In these three verses that end this chapter for all of us, whether we’re married or single, whether we have children or not, whether our children are still at home or whether they’re gone. And it’s this: every good thing that you and I enjoy comes to us from God. Just as children are a gift from God, every good thing comes down to us from God. And our hearts should be constantly filled with gratitude for God’s good gifts. You see, it is the essence of sin to think that somehow we have attained when in reality, every good thing we enjoy comes to us from God’s hand.

So, the key quality of being a successful parent is this attitude of dependence on God. And this attitude of dependence demonstrates itself in acknowledging that children are from the Lord.

But secondly, this attitude demonstrates itself in affirming that success can come only from God, in affirming that success can come only from God. In the first two verses, we see this principle laid out, and this is where I want us to spend the bulk of our time this morning that remains. Notice the first two verses: “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.” Let’s stop there.

Now, “building a house” refers specifically to raising a family. It’s used that way throughout the Old Testament, that expression. That also means that the metaphor of the watchman, or I should say, the expression about a watchman is a metaphor for another part of parenting. It’s a metaphorical description of a parent’s responsibility. Now, when you put those two together, it is a profound illustration of the genius of the Holy Spirit because He reduces our responsibilities as parents to two very basic duties: building and protecting, building and protecting. If you are a parent or a grandparent, or you have some influence on the life of a little one, this is where your responsibilities lie: building and protecting.

Building refers to the positive preparation for living a productive life and providing the children with a knowledge of God and a knowledge of His ways. What a powerful image. Building, you’re building a life. It’s as if you laid a foundation, make sure that it’s laid well and right, with the right materials. And then, you construct on that foundation the lumber that will be the support for that life. And then eventually, you add to it grace and beauty and appearance. You’re constructing a life.

Protecting refers to keeping all the harmful influences away. Being a watchman is a picture of guarding the life of the little ones God has put in our care. Obviously, it refers to physical protection. God has much to say about defending those who are defenseless from those who would prey upon them, from predators who would prey upon them. We do much to try to protect our children in this way from harmful, physical danger.

But it also refers to protecting the child from harmful spiritual influences as well. Most of you are familiar with Bunyan’s book *Pilgrim’s Progress*, but you may not be quite as

familiar with another book he wrote called *The Holy War*. In *The Holy War*, Bunyan describes yet, or paints I should say yet another allegory. In this case, he portrays the human soul as a city. He calls it the city of Mansoul. And he describes this city as being surrounded by those who would love to gain access to the city of Mansoul and plunder all that they find there. The gates of Mansoul, as you might imagine, are described by the senses: the eyes, the ears. This is the way those who would destroy the city of Mansoul gain access to it.

What a powerful picture of what is absolutely true. You see, there are those who peddle all kinds of soul-damaging things, who stand outside the souls of our children, trying through their eyes and their ears to gain access to their souls. They want to get to their hearts, to their minds because if they can poison the fountain, they'll destroy the stream.

Solomon in the book of Proverbs gives his sons this very, or his son I should say and to the other men of Israel this very wise advice. Proverbs 4:23: "Watch over your heart (guard your heart) ... because from it flow the springs of life." Listen. Guard your heart. Guard the gates through which things can gain access to your heart because all of the rest of your life and the decisions you make, and all of the issues of life flow from your heart. As parents, we're responsible to be watchmen on the walls of our children's souls, to try to guard and protect them as much as we can from those harmful influences.

But notice the main point that Solomon's making in these two important duties. He says we're to build and we're to protect, but here's his main point. Verse 1, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain." In other words, if the Lord isn't involved in all the activities of our building our children's lives and protecting them from danger, then all of your efforts will be in vain. The word "vain" simply means "empty, worthless". You see, even our best efforts are ultimately futile if God has no share in them. If God isn't building along with us, if He isn't guarding with us, then it'll all be for nothing. Our best efforts, our best example, our best teaching, our best training are absolutely worthless if God is not involved.

Now let me quickly say that this is not an excuse for not making the effort, and we're going to talk about that in a moment. But Solomon's point is this: as builders - that is, as those who are serving as an example to our children, who are teaching and training our children - as builders, we won't do everything exactly right. I'm reminded of the images

from the '94 California earthquake. Many of you who were not in that area still have as part of your mind the images that were portrayed of those, particularly the Northridge Meadows apartment building where so many died - that building that just collapsed like a layer of pancakes one floor on top of another. And for days and weeks, they tried to rescue those who might still be living in there.

My mind as I thought about that building went certainly to the families of the victims, but then it went back another step and tried to imagine what it would be like to have been the architect or the one who constructed that building in which those people died. You know, they did the best they could. They built according to the best engineering practices that they knew of. They followed the laws that were in place at the time. But when that mighty quake came on that January morning, the whole thing collapsed in a pile of rubble.

In the same way, we may work hard as parents, but we aren't perfect. Our examples are flawed. Our teaching is often inadequate. So, unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it.

Taking the second metaphor that Solomon gives here, we are their "protectors". We're the watchmen on the wall protecting them, but we can't completely protect our children. We can't even completely protect them physically. Last summer, Sheila and I got a powerful illustration of this. Our oldest daughter Lauren apparently went swimming at a pool that had very common bacteria in it, and two virulent bacteria gained access to her inner ear. We were supposed to come here, you remember. Many of you prayed for us. And those bacteria gained access and immediately began to multiply and soon infected the bone behind her ear that's adjacent to the brain.

And we discovered in the process that this used to be the leading cause of death among children. And for two weeks, they put five different intravenous antibiotics in her simultaneously, ones that are intended for adults and not for children to try to kill these bacteria, try to keep from having to remove the bone that had been infected. I remember thinking many times, "God, I am absolutely unable to protect my children like I want to protect them." I find myself, like I'm sure some of you do, as I put my children to bed at night sometimes praying, "God" (using the image from the Old Testament, God), "be their shield. Be their protector because I can't be all that I want to be."

And folks, if we can't protect our children physically (and we can't), then how much more is it true that we cannot protect them from all of the harmful spiritual influences that can be brought to bear on their lives? And so Solomon says, "Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain."

Notice how Solomon begins to make the application in verse 2. He says, "It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors." Now some people love this; this is like their life verse. But that's not what he's saying. Notice Solomon continues with this same word "vain" that he had in verse 1. It's worthless. It's absolutely worthless to rise up early and retire late. You can even put in overtime at the job of parenting and, without the Lord's work, it will be completely unproductive. That doesn't mean we shouldn't put in long hours. What it means is that if God isn't involved, then it'll be worthless – absolutely unproductive. Long hours do not necessarily mean success.

Notice he says you can "eat the bread of painful labors". Literally, it's a reference to working to the point of exhaustion. Some of you mothers certainly can appreciate that. Here's Solomon's point. You can work long and hard, but if the Lord doesn't intervene, it accomplishes absolutely nothing.

Notice how verse 2 finishes with this profound statement: "for He gives to His beloved even in His sleep." Sleep refers to calm rest. It's not that you don't work; instead, it's that you work as hard as you can work. And then when you lay down, you lay down as one who is free from anxiety, realizing that you are not alone responsible for the life of this child. As one writer says, "The world exhausts itself in absolute independence. The believer quietly works and waits on God."

But let me hasten to say, because this is very important in our day, that Solomon is not denigrating work and effort in our responsibilities as parents. In fact, turn with me to Deuteronomy 6. We turned to this passage last Sunday night as we're continuing to look at the person of our God, but I want you to notice Deuteronomy 6. You remember the context. The children of Israel have been for forty years wandering in the wilderness. All of them have died except for two. And now Moses, on the plains of Jordan overlooking the city of Jericho, is reminding the people what's important.

And notice how he begins 6:1. He says, "Now this is the commandment (singular) and there's just one overarching commandment I want you to remember, I want you to

understand and it's made up of statutes and judgments." In other words, all of those little rules have this in common. This is what they're about. This is how they can be summarized. What is this commandment? Verse 5: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." I just love how Moses simplifies everything. You know, life can be so complicated and some people make the Christian life complicated. You know what? It's pretty simple. Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself.

But I want you to notice how Moses turns in verse 6. Now he's going to tell us some practical ways to express our love for God. "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart." You, individually, allow the Word of God to be in your heart. Be thinking about it, be meditating on it, be poring over it. Care about what God has commanded. You want to know whether or not you love God? How do you treat His Word? What did Christ say? "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." It's the same thing.

But then notice verse 7. Here's another way to express your love for God. "You shall teach these words (that is, God's Word, you shall teach them) diligently to your sons and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."

You say, "What do those phrases mean?" Well, they mean all the time. Sitting and walking encompasses everything you do. Lying down and rising up is everything you do. The Word of God is to permeate your instruction of your children. If you want to show your love for God, then take the Word of God, let it permeate your own heart and then be teaching it to your children. Be teaching it to your children diligently.

Ephesians 6:4 says "bring your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Psalm 127 is not excusing lazy parenting. You see, God's sovereignty doesn't cancel our responsibility to work hard. Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." Can you honestly say before God that you parent your children toward God with all your might?

Romans 12:11 says that we're not to "lag behind in diligence." Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily as for the Lord, rather than for men." Listen. We should teach and train our children as if everything depended on us.

We live in a day of parental neglect. Parents relinquish responsibility for their kids to the schools, to the daycare, even to the church. Listen. Your kids are not our responsibility. They're your responsibility. God has given you the responsibility of being a parent. Parents alone bear the responsibility for raising their children in the fear of the Lord. Review your responsibilities as a parent. Come through the texts of Scripture. Study and read the texts that talk about what it means to be a parent. Read a good book like *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Ted Tripp. And this goes for you grandparents as well. If I had time, the Scripture has a lot to say about your responsibility to your children's children.

According to Deuteronomy 6, the best way to raise godly children is to keep them exposed to the Word of God. How do you do that? How do you keep your children exposed to the Word of God? Well, first and foremost, be in the Word yourself. It's impossible for you to be talking about God's Word when you sit down, when you rise up if you yourself aren't in the Scripture. You say, "Well, you don't understand my schedule and what I have to do to work." Listen. What's the largest priority? Get up earlier. Rise up early. Stay up late. Turn off the television. Come home from work earlier.

You know, I had a friend who worked in a nursing home, and he did an informal survey of those in the nursing home. He asked them this. He said, "What are your regrets? If you could live life over again, what would you do differently?" He said to me one day and I've never forgotten this. He said, "I never met a single person in the nursing home who said, 'I wish I had spent more time at the office.'"

Pour yourself into the Word yourself. Then insist that your children spend private time in God's Word each day. Our eight-year old and our five-year old have a time each morning when they're supposed to sit in their room and the eight-year old, our daughter Lauren, reads to herself and to Katie from the Word of God, and then they pray together. Train your children to have those habits of being in the Scripture every day. Teach your children God's Word at a set time each day as well as when you walk by the way in the daily parts of life and conversation. You see a gorgeous scene. Remind them of the greatness of God. You're talking about something in the news. Remind them of what God thinks about that. That's what Moses was saying in Deuteronomy 6. Have your children in church with you each Sunday. And make sure they're involved in the life of the church.

Now, I know what some parents, how some parents respond to this. They say, “Well, you don’t understand. My child doesn’t seem to want to do those things and I don’t want to be legalistic and require it.” Now, can I say respectfully, “That’s ridiculous!” You do a lot of things, you insist on a lot of things from your kids because you believe it’s the best for them whether they like it or not.

Imagine if tomorrow morning you go into your child’s room and, and uh, you say, “Okay, you know. It’s time to get up for school.” And they say, “Mom, I want to stay in bed. I, I don’t really want to go to school today.” And you say, “That’s okay, honey. You go back to sleep because I know if I require you to go, then that’s really legalistic of me and I’m going to give you this lifelong hatred of school.” No, you don’t say, you never said that. No parent in the history of the world has ever said that. So why are some Christian parents afraid to insist that their children do what is spiritually good for them whether they like it or not?

Listen. As long as your children sleep under your roof and eat your food and are supported by you, you have a right to expect that they would follow after God as much as you can insist on it externally. God help us if we pay more attention to our own careers or our own entertainment or our children’s wants than to shepherding their lives. So we should work hard, Solomon says. We should work hard as if everything depended on us, but we should trust as if everything depended on God because it does.

Can I give you a warning? Hard work and a spirit of dependence are no guarantee of success. You see, many have misunderstood Proverbs 22:6. I’ll never forget in Hebrew class when I was forced to translate that troublesome passage. What it says literally is: “Train up a child according to his own way, and when he is old, he’ll not depart from it.” It’s saying suit your training to the specific aptitudes and personality of that individual child and when he is old, he won’t depart from what you taught him. It is not an ironclad promise that if you do A, B, and C, your children will turn out like you want them to turn out. Children do not come with lifetime guarantees.

Think about Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were in a perfect environment. In a sense, they had God as their father, and yet they chose to sin. Christ, for three and a half years day and night, poured himself into twelve men. Think about that. What would it have been like to have been one of those twelve men taught by Christ day in, day out, and yet one of them turned out to be a betrayer?

Ezekiel 18 has a very interesting statement. And we won't turn there because of time, but let me just remind you of what Ezekiel 18 says. The children of Israel had a little proverb they were saying. It was: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." In other words, the father sinned, and God's dealing with the children for the father's sin. And God says to Ezekiel, "Don't say that. That's not true." And he goes on to say something very interesting, and that is: there can be righteous parents with wicked children. and there can be wicked parents with righteous children. In other words, don't blame your parents for your sinful choices.

What God goes on to say is, "I will deal with each person for their choices." Regardless of what the home they grew up in, they will be dealt with by Me based on the choices they make. In other words, God is saying this: there can be the same exact influences on two different children with two entirely different results. The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay. Exactly the same influence, but it's all about the material on which it works.

You see, when you and I deal with our children, there are at least three influences at work in their hearts and lives. One of them is the Lord. The second one is external influences, and you and I are external influences as are their peers, etc. And the third is what's going on in their own hearts in response to the first two. You and I can only control a part of one of those – our input and influence into that life.

You remember in Luke 8 the parable of the soils? Very interesting - the parable of the soils all had to do with the situation in the heart. The same sower sowing the same seed, but in some cases it bore fruit; in other cases, it didn't. What was the difference? The soil, the heart on which it came to rest.

When our children stray, it's right that we examine our hearts, and it's right that we confess any failures on our part, but it's no excuse for the children who choose those paths. It's also no excuse for parents to neglect the basic duties of parenting and then write it off as the child's problem. In the end, God will judge every person, parent and child alike, for their decisions, failures, and choices.

You know, this reality should make us even more dependent on God - the reality that I can't reach inside my child's heart and turn the switch on, make them see what I want them to see, make them respond the way I want them to respond. It underlines the reality

that unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the watchman (excuse me), unless the Lord keeps the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.

Now what are the lessons for us briefly, just a couple of minutes, in this psalm? We've seen a number as we've gone through, but let me just point out a couple for you.

First of all, there's a lesson in gratitude: a lesson in gratitude. Listen, prosperity, success, every blessing we enjoy comes to us from God. James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect thing comes down from the Father above, with whom there is no variation or shadow cast by turning." Every good thing you enjoy comes to you from God and that should be a cause of constant gratitude. It is of the essence of sinfulness to be ungrateful. In Romans chapter 1 when God wants to, to lay down His charge against the human race, he says they, they refused to glorify God as God neither were (what?) thankful. It's not a little thing to God. Gratitude is crucial for everything that we have.

Second lesson is a lesson in dependence: dependence. You see, that should be the constant attitude of every endeavor in life, especially parenting. Are you dependent on God? Do you exercise an attitude of dependence on God? Let me give you a little test. There's only one question. Do you pray about every issue in your life? Peter in 1 Peter 5 says that the way we demonstrate our humility before God, our humbling of ourselves, our dependence on God, is by casting our care upon Him. Sometimes we quote that verse as if it's separate from the surrounding context, but "casting" is actually a participle. It's modifying the main verb which is "humble yourselves". In other words, we show our humility, we show our dependence on God by casting. Whatever you keep to yourself and don't pray about is a demonstration of your independence.

Thirdly, there's a lesson in trust: trusting God's providence. My father-in-law, who went to be with the Lord last year, was a professor of theology for fifty years. Many profound things he could share, but he often said this to all of us. He said, "Listen. Everything that the Bible teaches about God can be reduced to these two simple realities that you learned as a child. And if we could master them, then we would be trusting of God. And that is God is great (that is, He's God) and God is good." If we could really master those two concepts, we would learn to trust Him cause He's trustworthy. He's great, He can do whatever He chooses, and He's good. When it comes to giving, dispersing children, when

it comes to involving Himself in the work of raising and building a life and protecting a life, we can trust our God.

And finally, there's a lesson in grace: there's a lesson in grace. Listen. If you and I can't alone arrive at the final result of parenting, then what in the world do we think we can do in arriving at a right standing before God without God acting? If we can't raise our children without God's help, how can we arrive at a right standing before God without God doing it all? And in the case of parenting, we're responsible to do something. In the case of salvation, it's all of God. He acts on our behalf. Titus 3:5 – "God saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy."

William Tyndale is one of my favorite people. He's the father of the English Bible. I have a page from one of the earliest printings of the English New Testament in my office. Most people don't know that even though he was a man of tremendous influence, he had a very interesting motto that he often said. It was something like this: "Banish me to the poorest corner of the world if you please, but let me teach the little children and preach the gospel." You see, William Tyndale understood something very important and that is in the darkness of the medieval times, if he could teach the next generation, train and direct and shepherd their hearts toward God, then there was hope for the church for the future.

That's the influence, mothers, that you have, but don't ever forget where that influence comes from and what will ensure its result. "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain."

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this reminder of the proper attitude that we should have toward You - an attitude of absolute dependence. Thank You for our children. Thank You for the gift they are to us.

Father, help us to work hard, help us to rise early and to stay up late and to eat the bread of painful labor, but not thinking that our work is going to accomplish it, but instead then turning and trusting You, knowing that we can sleep, knowing that You are at work, that You are building the life, and You are protecting the soul.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.