

**The House That God Builds**  
**Psalm 127**  
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Well, today is Mother's Day, and let me add my congratulations to those of you who are mothers. Today I want us to step away from Matthew 6 and, not so much focus just on you who are mothers, but on the issue of parenting. Being a mother, and for that matter, being a parent, is a very, very challenging responsibility. I remember when Sheila was pregnant with our first child there was so much for us to learn. There were childbirth classes, which turned out to be absolutely worthless, but there were those classes. There were gadgets to learn and to purchase – strollers and car seats and boxes - that had those dreaded words at the bottom: "Some assembly required." We're getting all of the contraptions that were necessary, and my personal favorite in terms of contraptions – the Diaper Genie – which I think saved our home.

Although I was excited about having a child, I was overwhelmed, as I'm sure those of you who are parents understand, with the sense of responsibility. My wife and I were now going to be completely responsible for another human life. And it's right that we take seriously the stewardship that God has given us. But that idea of personal stewardship quickly, if we're not careful, becomes personal duty; and personal duty quickly becomes my sole responsibility. It's as if I alone am responsible for raising this child. And unfortunately, that sort of feeds into our pride and we think, "You know, if I just do the right things, if I have this checklist of things that I ought to do as a parent, and if I do those things successfully, what I'm supposed to do, then I'm going to get the right product. Things are going to turn out well."

Now we must be faithful in the stewardship God has given us, and we're going to talk some about that this morning, but at the end of the day there is one quality that is the most essential to being a successful parent. It's identified and developed in Psalm 127, where I want us to turn this morning. Now let me just say as you're turning, for those of you who aren't parents or for whom parenting is finished, for those of you who are single or in other situations in life, this text is going to very much apply to you as well. There are a couple of overriding principles in this text that are universal in their application, although specifically it deals with the issue of parenting. Psalm 127. Notice to begin with that this is a song of Solomon. Listen to what Solomon wrote, now almost three thousand years ago.

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,

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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.

This psalm is one of two psalms that are attributed to Solomon, the other one being Psalm 72. It's a difficult psalm for many to understand because it almost appears to be two separate themes buried under one psalm number. Obviously, verses 3 through 5 deal with the issue of children. Others look at the first couple of verses and wonder if they must be about other themes and there must be some other uniting theme that draws them together. But in fact, this entire psalm is about parenting. Parenting is the theme of this text. In fact, the Jews recited it as part of a thanksgiving service after the birth of a child. Its theme is the key quality of being a successful parent. And it is not a quality – this quality is not something that you do; instead, it is something that you think. It is how you think. It is not an activity, but it is an attitude. It is an attitude of dependence on God. This key attitude of dependency on God demonstrates itself in this psalm and in parenting in two specific ways. And I want us to look at the ways that our dependency on God demonstrates itself in the responsibility of bringing up children.

Now first of all, we demonstrate a spirit of dependence on God by acknowledging that our children are from the Lord. Now we're going to do something a little unusual this morning. I'm going to start with the second half of this psalm and then we'll come back to the first verses. So we see this specific way we are to demonstrate our dependency, acknowledging our children are from the Lord, in the final three verses. Look at them again.

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.

Now verse 3 obviously is the most famous verse in this psalm. And in that verse, children are referred to as a gift and as a reward. The Hebrew word translated 'gift' is used over two hundred times in the Old Testament, and many of those times it is used to refer to the land of Israel as Israel's inheritance. It was a gift from a father to his sons in the same way that children are a gift from our Father to us who are His sons. Now the word 'reward' is usually translated as 'wages.' That doesn't mean that we earn our children in some way. The idea is that the One under whom we serve has given us these children.

Right away, these two words present us with a powerful reality because when we think of child-bearing in our naturalistic age, it's easy for us to think of it as a mere physiological event, but Solomon here makes it clear that God is directly involved in this process. God is the source of children. We see this throughout the Scripture, but you can see this both positively and negatively in the life of Jacob the patriarch. For example, from Jacob we learn that God, for His own purposes, sometimes withholds children. Listen to Genesis 30:1-2.

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.” Then Jacob’s anger burned against Rachel, and (listen to what) he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”

God sometimes, for His own purposes, chooses to withhold children. Solomon understood this. Solomon, contrary to the law of God clearly revealed in Deuteronomy, ended up having 700 wives and 300 concubines. But as best we can figure from the text of Scripture, he only had one son – Rehoboam. God sometimes withholds children for His own reasons.

But God - when children come, He is the source behind them. He gives children as well. Listen to Jacob in Genesis 33:5. This is when Jacob and Esau come back together and are reunited. “[And Esau] lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said [to Jacob], ‘Who are these with you?’ So [Jacob] said, ‘The children whom God has graciously given your servant.’” God sometimes withholds children but, when children come, they come from Him.

And verse 3 calls them a gift and a reward. In what sense are children a gift and a reward? Well, if you survey the Scripture, there are a number of answers to that, but Solomon only gives us one here. Look at verse 4. “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth.” Those children who are born to us in the youth of our marriage are like arrows in the hand of a warrior. In other words, they’re a source of our defense. Now it’s hard for us to really appreciate this because today, if our home and family is attacked, we dial 911. And if our land is somehow threatened, our nation’s army defends it. But in those times, as a man aged, he depended more and more for these things on his children. And so the more, the better. Verse 5. “How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them...” – staying with that military image of children being our defenders. For some of you, like my parents (I’m the last of ten children), it may be time to shop for a bigger quiver, but, nevertheless, a quiver full of those who will rise in your defense is good, Solomon says. And by the way, let me just say here, because a lot of times Christians will misquote and misuse this verse, the blessing of children, even many children, doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t exercise stewardship even in the issue of how many children we plan to have. That’s a decision that we have to make before the Lord.

Notice verse 5. He goes on with this idea of their being our protection. He says, “They (that is, parents who have children) will not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.” In those days, if there was going to be a legal proceeding, there was no courtroom to which you went. Instead, the elders of each city gathered at the gate of the city and that’s where the business of the city was done. And so here Solomon says that if someone brings a legal proceeding against you, your children will rise in your defense. Someone who has many children is not as likely to be wrongly deprived of his rights or of justice in those legal proceedings. Sadly, then and now, it’s common for widows and orphans and others who have no one to protect their interest to be easily taken advantage of – not so, Solomon says, the man with faithful children. You see what Solomon is saying, parents? He’s saying today you protect your children; but when you are in old age, they become your protectors and your defenders. This is just one of the reasons that children are a gift and a reward.

But what if God hasn’t chosen to give you children? Sheila and I certainly understand what that’s like. For the first ten years of our marriage, because of a health issue Sheila had, we were told we

would be unable to have children at all. And so we had to wrestle with that in the early days of our marriage and we had to come to accept that reality; both theologically, that God was still sovereign and still good and still wise, that this was His best plan, and practically as well. So if you're married and God hasn't given you children, it simply means that God has another perfect plan for you – could be adoption, or perhaps it's lives that are better able to be devoted to ministry, as we see even some in the New Testament, some couples who are able to pour themselves out in ministry. Take whatever reasonable and ethical steps you can but, in the end, you must trust the goodness and wisdom of God's providence. If you take those reasonable steps to have children and you aren't able to, you're not settling for second best. That's God's best plan for you.

There's a broader lesson in this text for all of us, whether married or single, whether you have children or not. And the lesson is this: just as it is with children, every good gift, every good thing you enjoy comes to you from God as a gift of His grace. It is a gift to you from Him.

So the key quality of being a successful parent is an attitude of dependence on God. And that attitude demonstrates itself, first of all, by acknowledging that our children are from the Lord. Secondly, it demonstrates itself by acknowledging that our success is from the Lord. Any success we have in this parenting endeavor is from God alone. Now go back to verse 1, which at first glance doesn't seem to fit this whole issue of parenting and child-rearing. "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." Now our first clue that there is a connection here, other than just the proximity to verses 3-5, is that phrase that speaks of building the house, because that phrase elsewhere in the Old Testament is used to refer to raising a family in a number of places. Let me give you one example. In Deuteronomy 25:9, you have the laws regarding a levirate marriage. You remember that if a man was married, he died with no children, the law dictated that his unmarried brother marry the widow and raise up children to his name. But if the man decided he didn't want to do that, there was a way for him to get out of that responsibility. But to get out of it, he had to be publicly shamed. He would stand in the public square, say, "I don't want to take this woman, my brother's widow, as my wife." And the wife would remove his sandal and spit in his face. And she would say this, "Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house." Now obviously, she wasn't talking about building a physical structure. She was talking about raising children in the name of her dead husband, and she uses the image of building up a brother's house.

The same image is used in the theologically significant passage of 2 Samuel 7 where you have the Davidic Covenant. God says to David, Listen. "You wanted to build a house for Me (that is, a temple). You're not going to do it because you're a man of blood. Your son Solomon's going to do it." But God says, "David, I'm going to build a house for you." He didn't mean a physical structure again. He meant instead a family and a posterity, a dynasty that would sit on the throne.

But specifically in reference to raising children, this idea of building a house is used in the writings of Solomon. In Proverbs 14:1, listen to what Solomon wrote. "The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands." That isn't, again, referring to some physical structure that the wise wife builds. He's talking about raising a family. The wise woman carefully raises that family, those children, and also all of the affairs of the household, but the

foolish tears it down with her own hands. So you see how that image of building a house is used in connection with raising a family. In fact, the Hebrew word that is used for ‘children’ comes from a root word that means ‘to build.’ It’s a play on words. So here when he talks about building a house, he’s talking about raising a family, raising children. That means the second metaphorical description of parenting there, that second reference to being a watchman, is also a picture of parenting, just as building a house is.

You know, this is such a profound illustration of the genius of the Holy Spirit. We can complicate everything, but the Spirit here simplifies our responsibility as parents to two basic activities. We are to build and we are to protect. Building refers to the positive preparation of our children for living a productive life and for knowing God and His ways. That’s what we’re doing. We’re building. We’re teaching them how to live a productive life in the world. And more importantly, we’re teaching them to know God and His ways. We’re building. But we’re also protecting, and protecting refers to the negative preservation of our children from danger – both physical and spiritual danger. We’re responsible for their physical protection. God has much to say in the Scripture about defending those who are defenseless. And we do much to protect our children in this way, don’t we? But it also refers to protecting our children from harmful spiritual influences as well – their spiritual protection. Do you understand that when God thinks of your role as a parent, not only are you building but you’re also a watchman? You are a watchman on the wall of the soul of your children. You’re there to protect them.

Most of you are familiar with *Pilgrim’s Progress*. In his less well-known book *The Holy War*, John Bunyan likens man’s soul to a city; in fact, he calls the city Mansoul. And there are enemies in this allegory outside the city of Mansoul who want to break into the city and plunder it. How do they do that? Well, they attack the city of Mansoul at its weakest points – its gates. And what are the gates to the city of Mansoul? The senses, especially the eyes and the ears. That’s brilliant, because those who peddle all kinds of soul-damaging things would love to gain access to the minds of our children because if they can poison the fountain, they will destroy the stream. Solomon understood this. In Proverbs 4:23, he said, “Watch (or guard) over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow [all of the issues] of life.” How do you guard your heart? You watch the influences that come in its weak points; its gates – its eyes and its ears. Parents, you’re a watchman on the wall of the soul of your children. You better take the responsibility seriously to guard with great diligence.

Now let me just speak pointedly. I think in today’s culture, in today’s Christian culture, the greatest danger and greatest threat our children face in this way is free, unprotected access to the internet; and especially not only through their smartphones, but especially if they have free, unprotected access to the internet in their own bedrooms. You might as well allow every person who has a perverted view, who has a perverted approach to life, to set up booths in your child’s bedroom, and all day long be crying at him to accept and follow those things. If you haven’t guarded them in that way, you are neglecting your responsibility as a watchman.

But notice the main point Solomon is making about these two important duties for all of us as parents. Here’s his main point. Look at verse 1 again. “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.” Listen. “If the Lord isn’t involved in the activities of building and protecting the children in your

care, then all of your efforts will be in vain,” he says. The Hebrew word ‘vain’ means worthless. Our best efforts, our best example, our best teaching are all absolutely worthless if the Lord isn’t involved in this process. Now obviously, this isn’t an excuse for making a half-hearted effort (and I’m going to come back to that in a moment). But Solomon’s point is this: as builders, that is, as teachers and examples to our children, we are flawed and fallible people, and we cannot do this job as well as it ought to be done.

Sheila and I lived in California in 1994 during the Northridge earthquake. You’ve all seen the images that came out of that quake and you remember that those architects and builders who designed and constructed the Northridge Meadows apartment building, they used the best technology they had. They used the best techniques that were available to them at the time. They thought they had built it to be able to withstand a quake of that magnitude. But on that Monday morning, it all came crashing down and lives were lost. In the same way, you and I must work hard. We must do everything we can, but our examples are flawed and our teaching is often inadequate. “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it....”

Taking up that second metaphor of us as watchman, as the protectors of our children, do you understand that we cannot adequately protect our children even from physical danger? Sheila and I were reminded of that in a powerful way back in the summer of 2003 when we were in the process of coming to Countryside moving from southern California. Lauren, our oldest daughter, got two virulent bacteria in her ear. And within two days, it had infected the honeycomb bone behind the ear next to the brain. And what for many years had been the leading cause of death among children threatened our daughter’s life. And all of that came from two types of bacteria that are probably in most of our shoes this morning. If we can’t protect our children even from physical danger, how much less can we protect them adequately from spiritual danger? So “unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.”

Notice how Solomon applies this principle of dependence in parenting. Look at verse 2. He says, “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.” Solomon says, “It is worthless for you to rise up early and retire late.” His point is, “Listen. You can even put in overtime at this job of parenting and, without the Lord’s working in the hearts of your children, it’ll be completely worthless.” And notice he says you can “...eat the bread of painful labors...” That means you can work on parenting to the point of exhaustion. And you do. Solomon says you can work long and you can work hard, but if the Lord isn’t at work in the hearts of your children, it accomplishes absolutely nothing.

Instead, look at the end of verse 2 in this profound statement. “...for He (that is, God) gives to His beloved even in His sleep.” “His beloved.” There’s an interesting word play there in Hebrew because that is the root from which the name God gave Solomon comes. Jedidiah, ‘the one God loves.’ Solomon says, “God gives to me, the one He loves, even in my sleep.” And in New Testament terms, He gives to the one who is a believer in the true God through Jesus Christ, His Son, even in His sleep. ‘Sleep’ here refers to calm rest, when you are free from the anxiety that comes from believing that you alone are responsible for the outcome of your children. I love the way one writer puts it. Listen to this. “The world exhausts itself in absolute independence. The believer quietly works and waits on God.”

Solomon isn't denigrating work or effort in our responsibilities as parents. In fact, Solomon is the very one who said in Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do (including parenting), do it with all your might..." We ought to work hard. We ought to work long. In fact, we're commanded in Deuteronomy 6, Moses says, "These words, which I am commanding you today, (in total he's talking about the Scripture) shall be on your heart." In other words, you're to think about and study and meditate on the Scripture yourself. And then "...you shall teach them diligently to your [children] (that's a formalized impartation of the truth to your children) and (here's another way you do this) you shall talk of them (the Word of God) when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." Those are figures of speech that say in all of life, whatever you're doing, the Scripture's to be permeating what you're thinking about and what you're saying in your interaction with your children.

Ephesians 6:4. "...bring [your children] up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." God's sovereignty doesn't cancel our responsibility to work hard. Colossians 3:23. "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men..." We should teach and train our children as if the outcome depended entirely upon us. Sadly, we live in a day of parental neglect, when parents take care of their kids in terms of making sure they can play certain sports and they get a decent education, but they neglect a lot of their training. They give that responsibility to the daycare and then to some school of one form or another and even, Christian parents, to the church. Let's be clear, parents. You alone are responsible; you bear the responsibility for raising your children in the fear of the Lord.

So how can you fulfill that stewardship? Well, I would suggest you start by reviewing what your responsibilities as a parent are. Go to the Biblical passages. Study Deuteronomy 6. Study Ephesians 6:4. Read a couple of good books on parenting just as you would anything else that's important to you. Read Tedd Tripp's book *Shepherding a Child's Heart* or read William Farley's book *Gospel-Powered Parenting*. But according to Deuteronomy 6, the best way to raise godly children is to keep them exposed to the Word of God. So how do you do that? Well, start by being in the Word yourself. You start being a Christian parent by being in the Scripture every day yourself. You say, "Well, how can I do that? How can I fit that in to the busyness of my life?" Get up earlier. Go to bed later. Turn off the television. Leave work earlier. It's not a matter of time. It's a matter of priority. And your kids see your example. It reminds me of the young boy who was coming home with his parents from the dedication service for his baby brother. And as they were driving home from the dedication of his baby brother, this young man is just sobbing his heart out, and the parents are wondering what in the world has happened. And so they said, "Son, what's the matter?" And he said, "Well, Mom, didn't you hear what the pastor said? He said he wanted us to be raised in a Christian home, but I want to stay with you!"

Encourage your children to spend private time in God's Word every day. By the time our children were five, we encouraged them to spend time in the Scripture. They don't have to spend two hours. They just need to know that that's a priority in life. Listening to God and His Word is a priority. Teach your children God's Word both at a set time often during the week and as part of daily life and conversation as Deuteronomy describes. Have your children in church with you on the Lord's Day. Make God a priority in your life. Make sure your kids are involved in the life of the church.

Now when you hear those things, I've had parents say things like this: "Well, you know, my child doesn't want to do those things. And if I insist that he do them, that's legalistic and he may grow up hating church." Now let me say this kindly, but let me say it directly. That's ridiculous, okay? I mean, you insist on all kinds of things simply because they're good for your children. Imagine tomorrow morning you walk into your child's room to wake him up for school and, and the child says, "Mom, I don't want to get up today. I don't want to go to school." Now what do you say in response to that? "Of course, honey. You know, I don't want to be legalistic and I don't want you to grow up hating school so you just roll over and go back to sleep." You would never say that. No parent has ever said that. So don't be afraid to insist that your children do what is spiritually good for them whether they like it or not. It's true; you can't and I can't change my children's hearts. Only God can do that. But I don't have to give an account for their response to what they hear in those spiritual situations. But I will give an account to God for my stewardship with the spiritual responsibility I have in their lives. My children know that as long as they live in my house, as long as they're my dependents and I pay for any part of their lives, I will have certain spiritual expectations and so should you. God help us if we pay more attention to what our children want than to shepherding their lives on God's behalf as stewards. So we have to work hard as if everything really depended on us, but we always have to remember that everything really depends on God.

Let me give you a warning here. Many well-intentioned Christian teachers and Christian parents have misunderstood Proverbs 22:6 that says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." Listen. That is not an ironclad promise that if you put 'A' into the child, you're going to get 'B' out. In fact, I don't even think that passage is talking about the spiritual life of the child at all. That was the first assignment I had in Hebrew class and I remember translating it. It literally says, "Train up a child according to his own way, and when he is old, he'll not depart from it." It's basically saying, "Train a child according to his own aptitudes, his own personality, his own skills; and when he's old, he'll still be doing that." Has more to do with a career path than it does a spiritual outcome.

Children do not come with lifetime guarantees. Adam and Eve lived in a perfect environment, in a perfect home if you will, and they had a perfect parent, and they still chose to disobey. Christ disciplined the twelve for three and a half years, and one of them betrayed Him. If your children stray – sadly some of you sitting here this morning bear the weight of children who have departed from what you believe and have in some way given you great heartache. If they stray, it's right that we as parents examine ourselves, examine our hearts, take a serious look at our parenting and see how we may have failed and how we may have come short of our responsibility as stewards in their lives. And we ought to confess those failures to the Lord and to our children and seek their forgiveness as well. But in the end, we are not responsible for the choices our children make. Read Ezekiel 18. God says, "Listen. There can be a righteous parent with a wicked son. There can be a righteous parent with a righteous son. There can be a wicked parent with a wicked child. And there can be a wicked parent with a righteous son." And God says, "I'm going to deal with each one individually based on the choices they've made." Don't misunderstand. This isn't an excuse for parents to neglect the stewardship of parenting. But in the end, God will judge every person for their own choices. So kids, don't you for a moment blame your parents for the choices you make. God won't. This should make us even more



dependent on God. “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.”

Now what are the lessons we can learn from this psalm? Basically, there are two lessons that reflect the two halves of the psalm. First of all, in verses 3 to 5, we learn gratitude to God. Every success, every blessing, every good thing including children – all of them are from God. James 1:17. “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights....” There is nothing in your life that you have achieved on your own, no matter how hard you’ve worked or how feverishly you have tried. Every good thing you have is from the hand of God, and you should give God grateful thanks for it.

The second lesson comes in the first two verses. It’s dependence on God. We should develop this attitude of dependence as a constancy in every endeavor of life, especially in our parenting. You say, “How do I know if I’m truly dependent on God?” or “How do I express that dependency?” The Scripture’s very clear about that. The number one way we express our humility and dependence on God is in prayer. When’s the last time you really prayed on a regular basis for God to work in the hearts of your children? When you’ve said, “God, I want you to work in their hearts and change them. I can’t do this. I’m not adequate to this task. Make me as adequate as a fallen human being can be, but Lord, You need to work in their hearts. Tenderize them to the gospel. Draw them to Yourself. Work in this specific situation to produce in them what You want.” Prayer is the activity with which the attitude of dependence is primarily expressed. First Peter 5 makes that clear, doesn’t it? It says, “...humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God....” How? By “...casting all your [care] on Him, because He cares for you.” You want to measure your dependency on God in parenting? How much do you pray for yourself as a parent and for your children? Some people say, “Well, you know, if God is sovereign, why pray?” That’s the wrong question. The right question is, “If you don’t believe God is sovereign, why do you pray?” You better find the person who is in charge and start asking him to be involved.

William Tyndale produced the first English translation of the New Testament from the original Greek text. He’s the father of our English Bibles. That Bible you hold in your hand, through a progression of others, comes to you ultimately from William Tyndale, a man of tremendous influence. But few people know what his motto was. Listen to what William Tyndale said. He said, “Banish me to the poorest corner of the world if you please, but let me teach the little children and preach the gospel.” He understood the power of influence in the lives of children. Mothers, there is incredible influence in what you do, and fathers as well. Just don’t forget where that influence and the power of that influence ultimately comes from. If there is change produced, it will be because of God.

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.

Let's pray together.

Father, produce these things in us. We do thank You for Your good gifts to us. And on this day when we honor mothers, we thank You for the gift of children. We thank You for all of Your good gifts. Lord, each of us has been the recipient of blessing upon blessing, grace upon grace, goodness upon goodness, and we thank You, O God. But Father, I'd pray that You also produce in us this spirit of dependence. May we see and understand that we don't have the capacity to do what most needs to be done in the life of our children. We cannot change their hearts. Only You can do that. And may we regularly express our dependence on You in prayer on their behalf. Lord, make us faithful. May we work hard at doing what You've called us to do. With all of our might, help us to, to be engaged in this issue of parenting. But Father, remind us that unless You build the house, all of our labor is in vain. Unless You guard their souls, all of our work is for nothing. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.